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C64



THING ON A SPRING

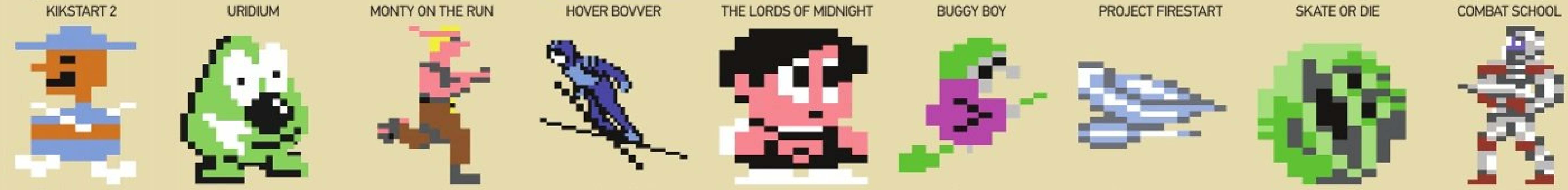
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FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

RIDGE RACER
HOW NAMCO'S ARCADE RACER IS STILL GOING STRONG AFTER 18 YEARS

STARQUAKE
STEVE CROW ON THE SECRETS BEHIND HIS SPECTRUM HIT

BRØDERBUND
THE AMERICAN PUBLISHER THAT MIXED GAMING WITH LEARNING

RAFFAELE CECCO
THE CREATOR OF CYBERNOID, EXOLON AND EQUINOX DISCUSSES HIS COLOURFUL CAREER


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THE RETROBATES

BEST STREET FIGHTER II CHARACTER



DARRAN JONES
Zangief. One of the most imposing characters, he introduced me to the 'rotate stick like a mad man' technique.
Expertise:
Steering the helm of an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
With an expensive marine tank
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT
Back in the day my favourite character was Blanka, for no other reason other than he looked the most interesting out of the eight original fighters.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Starquake
Favourite game of all time:
Starquake



JASON KELK
I've never been a fan of *Street Fighter*, but I'll choose the lovely Chun-Li – and it definitely isn't because I used to fancy her or anything. Honest!
Expertise:
Bizarre pieces of 8-bit hardware
Currently playing:
Steel Dragon Evolution (PS2)
Favourite game of all time:
Io



ASHLEY DAY
Who's the guy in the background of Chun-Li's stage, slaughtering the chicken? He's my favourite.
Expertise:
The games of Team 17, the *Shining Force* series and the Amiga CD32
Currently playing:
Frog Minutes (All proceeds of this iPad game go to charity, so please go buy it)
Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



DAVID CROOKES
Ken, but only because he sounds so regular and yet packs a punch – he more than lives up to the original kanji character spelling of his name (which means 'fist').
Expertise:
All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing:
Call of Duty: Black Ops
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



PAUL DRURY
Chun-Li. I have a picture of her done in cross-stitch by Faye Lampshire on my toilet wall and wink at her every morning. I should get out more.
Expertise:
Rare stamps
Currently playing:
Motorstorm Apocalypse (PS3)
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK
My favourite *Street Fighter II* character is that poor four-door saloon car that gets destroyed. I nicknamed her Beatrice, after my late third wife.
Expertise:
Japan
Currently playing:
Akira (SNES)
Favourite game of all time:
Pathologic



CRAIG GRANNELL
Blanka, not because of any particular powers or special moves, but more because how he looks is how I feel every single morning before I get some caffeine into me.
Expertise:
Games you don't need 36 fingers to play
Currently playing:
Forget-Me-Knot for iOS
Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.

LOADING...



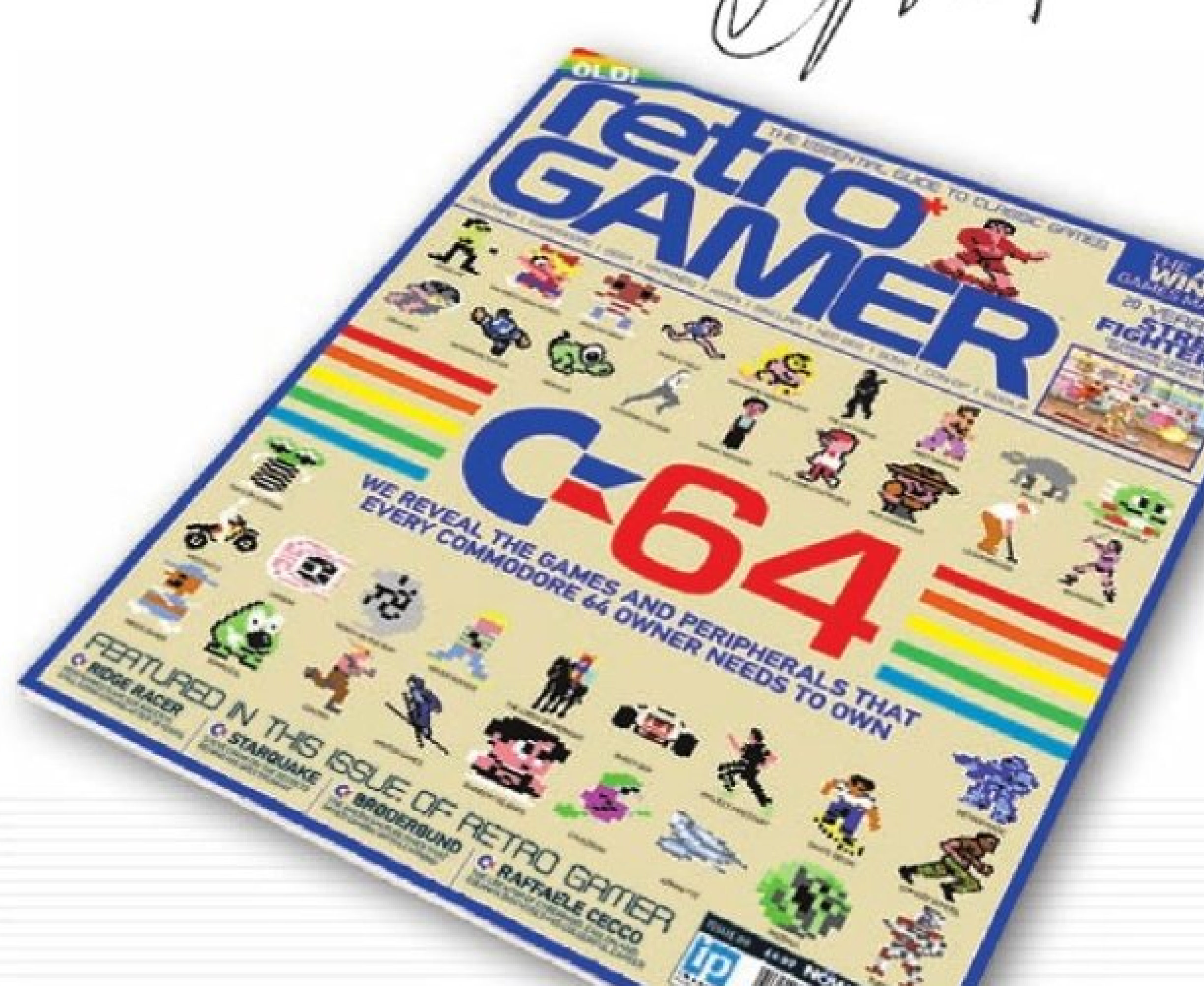
Well, the 3DS is finally here and it's been an interesting launch. Despite claims of headaches from some and moaning about its so-called lacklustre launch line-up, the machine has still gone on to have the strongest launch of any Nintendo handheld.

'So why are we talking about it in this month's editorial?' I hear you ask. Well, why wouldn't we? If you head on over to our reviews section you'll discover a number of games that are bound to be of interest to the average retro gamer. There's a brand new *Pilotwings* – the first in 15 years, no less. Capcom has somehow managed to cram an impressive port of *Super Street Fighter IV* into the tiny machine, while Namco has delivered a truly exciting handheld version of *Ridge Racer*.

Best of all, though, is the fact that strategy master Julian Gollop's new game is finally here, and while the content itself isn't strictly retro material, the gameplay pulls on everything from *Laser Squad* to *X-Com*.

Add in the incoming release of *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time 3D*, *Starfox 64 3D*, *Kid Icarus*, *Dead Or Alive Dimensions* and two new *Resident Evil* games, and fans of long-running franchises will be more than happy with the new machine.
We certainly are.

Enjoy the magazine,



CONTENTS

>> Load 89 Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

RETRO REVIVALS



In the hot seat this month...

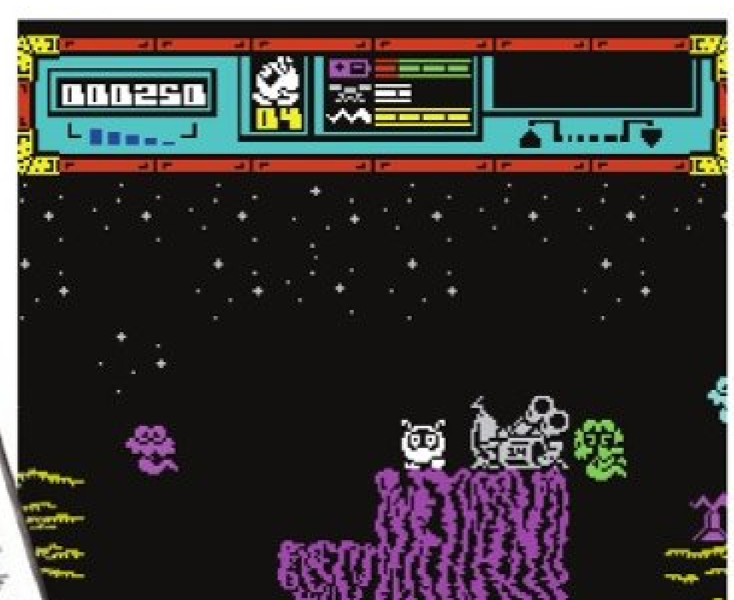




"BioWare created a new Star Wars masterpiece" Samuel Roberts

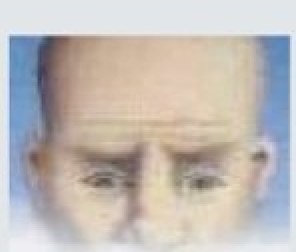




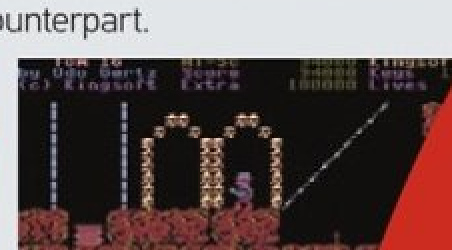




retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL







ESSENTIALS

RETRO RATED



retroradar

>> GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> It's been an interesting month in terms of news. Here, Elite tells us about the success of its iOS Spectrum emulator, and we take a look at an interesting new way on introducing today's youth to retro gaming. However, by far the most exciting news is that Capcom has revealed that high-definition remakes of both *Resident Evil 4* and *Code: Veronica X* are on the way. Colour us excited!

CONTENTS







» [iOS] There is already a great range of games available on Elite's emulator, with many of them being themed to franchises or developers.

THE SPECTRUM ELITE

HOW ELITE HAS REVITALISED ONE OF GAMING'S MOST BELOVED HOME COMPUTERS ON CUTTING-EDGE HARDWARE

If you want categorical proof that good gaming systems never die, look no further than the recent success of two ZX Spectrum compilations for Apple's iOS. Published by Elite Systems – itself a veteran of the industry, having been incorporated way back in 1984 – *ZX Spectrum: Elite Collection* is divided into two volumes, each containing six titles. A recent update has enabled in-app purchasing, and the ability to download further game packs – as well as access to the Matt Smith's legendary *Jet Set Willy* – is now available. We spoke exclusively to Elite's Steve Wilcox about this noble and praiseworthy retro gaming venture.

Retro Gamer: How do you feel about the success of your Spectrum emulator?
Steve Wilcox: The media and consumer reaction to the announcement of *ZX Spectrum: Elite Collection* has been extensive and very enthusiastic. Our concerns since have been to ensure that both groups understand that Vol. #1 and #2 of the App are a work-in-progress – a rough diamond if you like – and that we're committed to developing the App over the weeks and months ahead.

How difficult has it been to secure certain licenses?
Elite has been around since many of these ZX Spectrum games were first published – and in many cases before then. Consequently, Elite is uniquely placed to source and secure the consents necessary to include ZX Spectrum games within the ZX:EC iOS Apps. Indeed, many of the people with whom we had contact in the Eighties and Nineties are still 'in harness' and have been instrumental in enabling us to secure the necessary consents. Also, because of our intimate knowledge of the antecedents of the majority of the ZX Spectrum games, we usually know which doors to knock on... and which not to. In our efforts to secure consent, we've also had some sterling support from **Retro Gamer** – for which we are most grateful.

How do you go about choosing which classic games will appear on the service?
Essentially, we use three criteria. 1: What's legally available to us. 2: What's being requested. We keep these lists under constant review. 3: What's practically available to us – there have been instances where the copyright owners have identified possible imperfections in their chain of property rights (and consequently have yet to issue us with their consent) and others where the

> **"Vol. #1 and #2 are a work-in-progress, a rough diamond"**

commercial terms demanded don't (yet) stack up.

What packs have been the most popular so far?
There have been some obvious favourites, as can be seen by checking the 'Top 10 In App Purchases' for ZX:EC at the iTunes App Store. However, that's only one of the measures of popularity. Some of the apparently less commercially successful in-apps, like the 'Julian Gollop Collection', have been met with almost universal acclaim by those who have purchased them.

How does Matthew Smith feel about the large number of royalties his old games have secured him?
You should probably ask Matthew about that, but when last we saw him he had a considerable bounce in his step.

What companies/games can we look forward to in the future?
We're in communication with the owners of almost all of the most notable ZX Spectrum games ever published, and while not all of those communications have yet led to the consents we're seeking we believe that in all but a very few cases, eventually, they will.

Why do you think a ZX Spectrum emulator has proven to be so popular on iOS?
We'd probably say the fact that the Apps run the 100 per cent original ZX Spectrum code means that they do a pretty good job of enabling people to rekindling some fond memories.

It must be immensely satisfying to still be working in the industry after 27 years. What's the secret of Elite's success?
There's no secret. Like almost all businesses which have been operating for a long time, Elite has had its fair share of highs and lows. The highs are usually associated with critical and commercial success; the lows with critical and commercial failure. Perhaps a defining feature has been Elite's capacity, during those lows, to identify the source of its problems and remain determined enough to fix them – even though sometimes it would be easier (and commercially more expedient) to simply walk away.

Is there anything you can tell us about the anniversary Spectrum you're releasing next year?
We're making progress toward a formal announcement but we're not there yet. We'll be sure to let you know when we are. *



» [iOS] *Manic Miner* is just one of the games currently available. It's worth noting though that some titles are more suited than others.

We look at what Elite's emu offers

>> Game packs, compatibility and the future games we want



The Game Packs

Thanks to in-app purchases, there are now 14 different game packs available for the *ZX Spectrum: Elite Collection*. Elite has been working tirelessly to secure some of the system's most notable titles, and has worked with famous coders such as Julian Gollop and Stephen Crow to bring some of 8-bit gaming's best moments to iOS. The Gollop collection is particularly worthy, featuring *Laser Squad*, *Chaos* and *Rebelstar*. It's the perfect accompaniment to Gollop's *Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars*, recently released on 3DS.



Apple Vs. Google

Elite's Steve Wilcox explains the difference between iOS and Android, and why Elite picked Apple: "One vitally important difference between Apple and, say, Google is Apple's respect versus Google's contempt for copyright. Apple has publicly available, written criteria against which it assesses and reviews every App submitted for distribution. By contrast Google allows every submitted App to be distributed at its Android Market, unless and until it receives a Take Down Request from a copyright owner or its agents."



Games we still want

There are plenty of excellent games available, but that doesn't mean we wouldn't want to see a few more of them. The most obvious (and the least likely to appear) are the works of Ultimate. Virtually every one of its games would work brilliantly, but we can't imagine that Microsoft would be interested. An isometric collection featuring the likes of *Head Over Heels* would also go down a treat, while the slow, plodding pace of Gargoyle games like *Dun Durach* would suit the format brilliantly. Oh, and let's not forget *Dizzy*.

THE RETRO DEBATE

>> Readers give their verdict on Elite's new iOS emulator

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Morkin
I've only tried the Lite version & therefore only played *Batty* and, to be honest, it's not my cup of tea as I can't cope with the touch controls.

FatTrucker
The emulation is good, the presentation is good, the pricing is good and the choice of games is okay so far. What lets it down (on small i-devices like the iPhone and iPod anyway) is the controls.

JetSetWilly
The packs are priced quite right, it's faithful to its source, and it's a great little emulator.

sscott
Have a couple of packs on the iPad; the controls are just not good enough. Was not impressed.

ipmarks
I love it... but really only because I can play *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy* on the move; for those games I think the controls work well.

Jay
I think it's great, but depends on the game you're trying to play. Some play terribly with touch screen controls. Some – like *Frank Bruno's Boxing* – are fine.

the_hawk
It's a great idea; I love the fact that it exists. It's not too expensive, has some decent game choices and it's only fair that the IP holders get a slice of the pie.

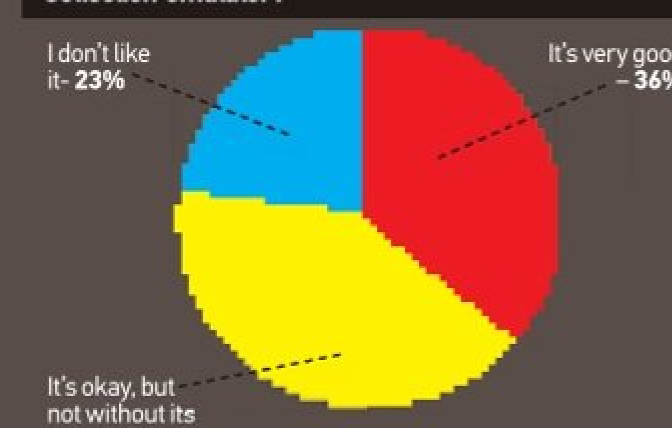
markopoloman
Been playing *Jet Set Willy* on the iPhone and LOVE it. Obviously a C64 emu like this would be far better though.

psj3809
I really like it. Read recently that Matthew Smith got a nice bit of wedge as his games are now on it, so thats great news.

Joey
The app is nice for me as I never had a Spectrum, so I've enjoyed playing through some of games for the first time. *Saboteur* I've enjoyed a lot the last week.

FORUM OPINION

What do you think the *ZX Spectrum: Elite Collection* emulator?



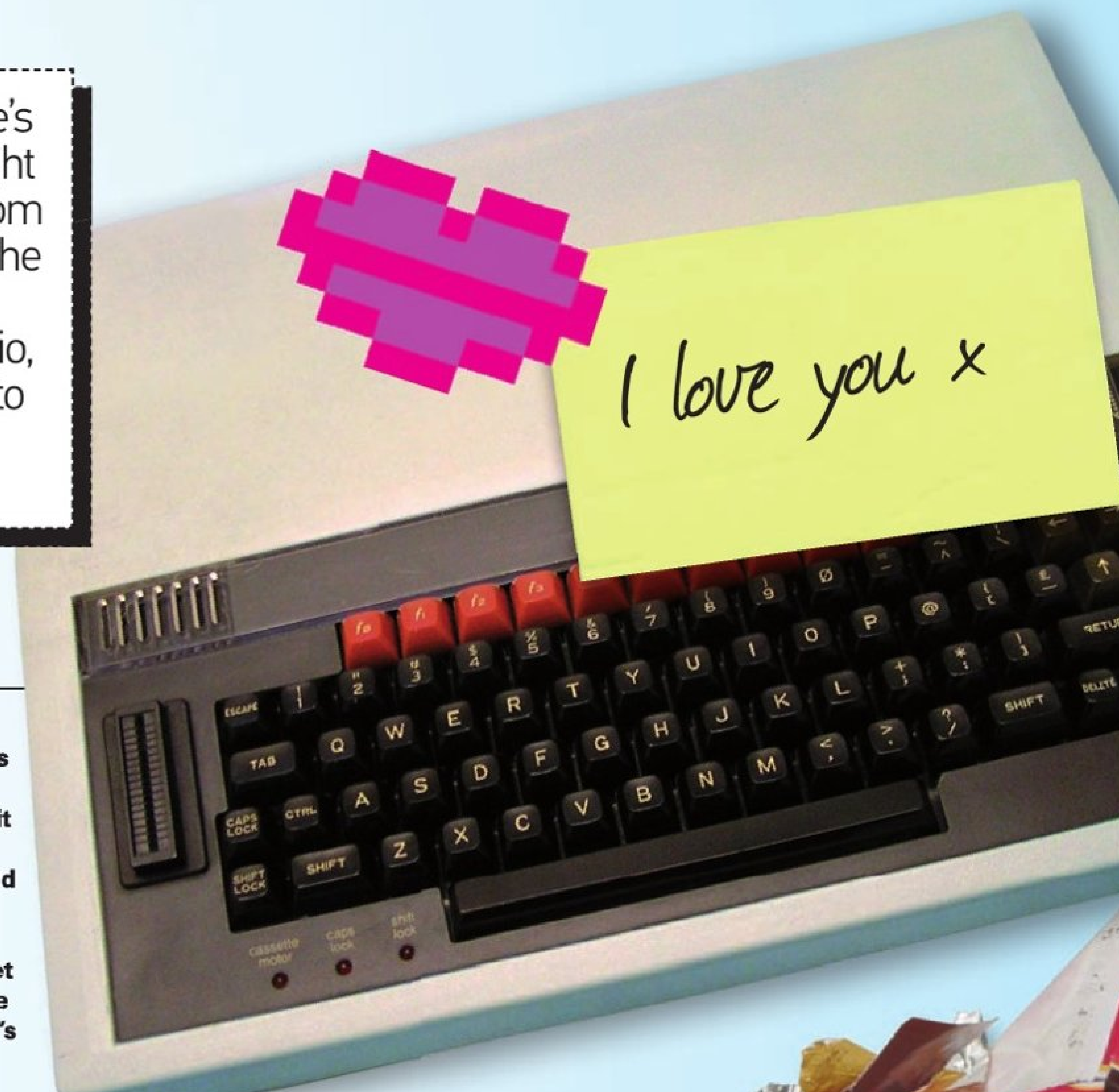
retrocolumns

>> RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.



Hi there. My name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



Love bytes

I quite often talk to my computer. Not issuing it voice commands or anything *Star Trek IV* like that; I just sort of chat to it as though it were a slightly temperamental friend who is a little bit sensitive to things. You know, like the weird girl at parties you would go to as a teenager who always got really pissed and would end up crying on the stairs, and you thought that if you spoke nicely to her, she might let you cop a feel, but she was probably more likely to be sick on your shirt. Not saying I would want to get off with my Mac, but surely it's only a matter of time before Apple come up with an app or peripheral that allows you to do that. Let's hope so.

This can probably be traced back to when computers were more temperamental. We've all heard how the early programming days of Matt Smith were made even more difficult by the fact that every time his mum boiled the kettle, the TRS-80 he was working on would crash. My Dragon 32 was an absolute bastard to get to work. I could waste an entire day trying to get it to load *Cuthbert In The Jungle* and still not have had a game by the time my mum called up the stairs saying my dinner was ready. I messed around with tape levels, kept my finger on the play button, waggled leads, but all of this was bullshine. I knew that what my Dragon, and later my BBC, really wanted were some kind words and a gentle touch.

Yes, I would stroke my computer and speak softly to it, hoping that showing it some human kindness and gratitude for all the hard work it was doing for me would persuade it that I was one of the good guys and that it should be friendly and work for me.

I have even been known to sing to it. Making up songs about how lovely it was, and what a good pal I considered it to be, seemed to be the natural extension of this anthropomorphism. (I would just like to say that I couldn't think what that word was. I knew it wasn't personification, but I was buggered if I could remember. I'd like to thank all of my Twitter followers for their help. First the Iran protests, then Egypt and now this. The power of social networks grows daily.)

I make this startling revelation because I cannot believe that I am the only person who did this. There must be loads of you retro heads out there that would comfort your computers. Not games consoles; there's nothing human or lovable about them. They are just machines devoid of personality or the ability to love. But think of your friendly Spectrum, or your slightly dim but still eager-to-please Oric. Even the old brick of a dud machine the Vic-20 had some charm to it. They were all different and each had their own personality.

Do the world a favour. Kiss a computer.





There must be loads of you retro heads out there who would comfort your computers

EVIL RISES AGAIN

XBOX LIVE AND PLAYSTATION NETWORK PORTS CELEBRATE THE 15TH ANNIVERSARY OF CAPCOM'S SERIES





Fans of slavering zombies and things that go bump in the night have ample reason to rejoice this month because Capcom has confirmed it's giving a high-def lick of paint to two of the most celebrated entries in its highly esteemed *Resident Evil* franchise. *Resident Evil 4* and *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X* will both be re-tooled and released on Xbox Box Live Arcade and PlayStation Network later this year.

Resident Evil Code: Veronica started life as a Dreamcast exclusive way back in 2000, and not only was it the first game in the linage to debut on a non-Sony system, but it was also the first to feature true 3D backgrounds as opposed to the pre-rendered, static settings of the first three games. The lead protagonist is Claire Redfield, sibling of the original game's Chris Redfield, who also appears as a playable character. The game was subsequently updated for a PlayStation 2 release in 2001, adding the all-important 'X' to the title. This new and improved version boasted an additional nine minutes of cut-scenes and subtly improved visuals. Another port arrived in 2003 on the GameCube.

As much as we love *Code: Veronica* here at **Retro Gamer**, it's the second HD release that has us really salivating with excitement. *Resident Evil 4* is widely regarded as one of the finest videogames ever produced, and it marked a significant change of pace for the series when it was launched on the GameCube in 2005. Focused around Leon Kennedy (previously seen in the second *Resident Evil* title) and his struggle to uncover a malevolent mystery in deepest, darkest Southern Europe, *Resident Evil 4* is notable for making some sweeping changes to the core gameplay. The camera is set 'over the shoulder' rather than in fixed positions, and the traditional lumbering zombies are exchanged for parasitically-controlled peasants, who prove to be more intelligent and are capable of communicating with one another. *Resident Evil 4* was eventually released on a whole host of other platforms, including the PS2, Wii and even the iPhone.

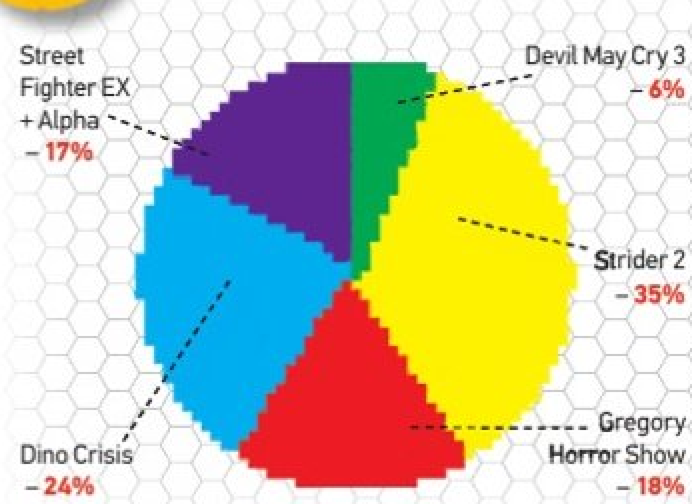
> **"This new HD edition of Resi 4 will be the most exhaustive yet"**

The new HD edition of the game will be the most exhaustive yet, collating the bonus content that has appeared over the years in other versions. The 'Separate Ways' scenario – which was bundled with the PS2 edition and revolves around Ada Wong's connection to Albert Wesker – makes the cut, adding even more story and gameplay.

The HD remakes mark the 15th anniversary of the franchise, which has sold a staggering 45 million copies worldwide since the launch of the original game on the Sony PlayStation back in 1996. Capcom is understandably chuffed about the success of the series, which has spawned numerous sequels, spin-offs, comic books, merchandise and a line of movies that have grossed $750 million in total, despite being about as enjoyable as having a root canal without anaesthetic. The fifth entry in the cinematic series is due for release in 2012. It's probably going to be as rubbish as the others, so just console yourself with the fact that the two HD updates are due for release later in the year, giving you plenty of time to stock up on the military-grade Y-Fronts you'll inevitably be filling in abject teror. *

FORUM OPINION

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY



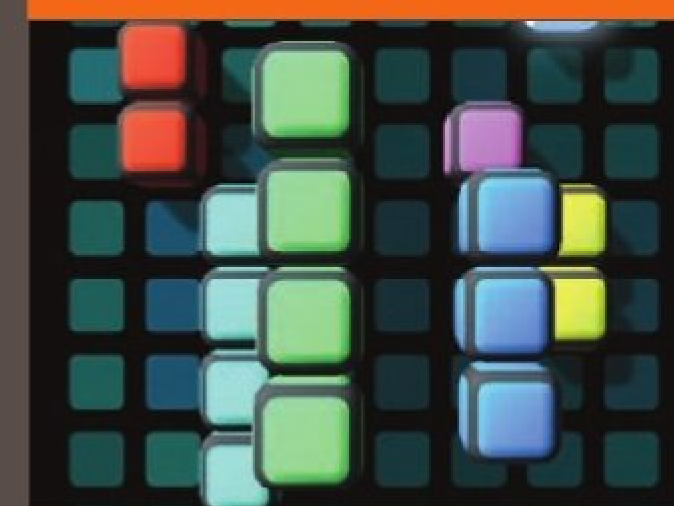
What Capcom game do you want to see in HD?

"The game I want is *Gregory Horror Show*. Always fancied trying that. But HD isn't really going to do much with the visuals on that one, so for an HD remake *Dino Crisis* could be good and gets my vote."
– Antiriad2097

"*Dino Crisis*! That series is as extinct as the dinos, but maybe if they rereleased it in HD it could revitalize the franchise."
– davekam

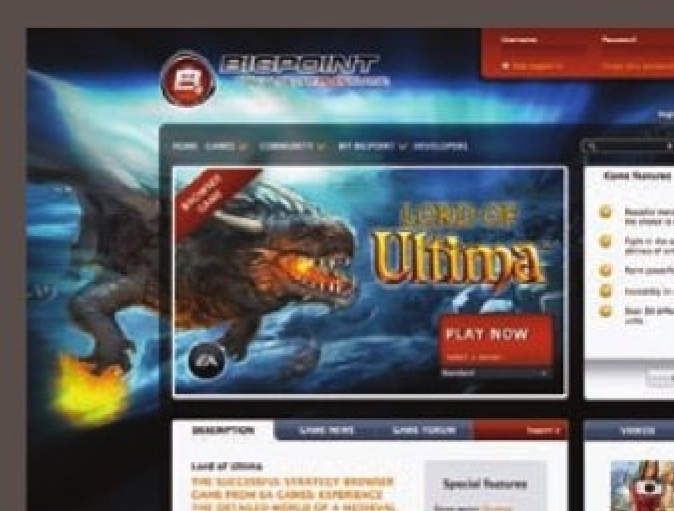
MICROBYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Spectrum legend heads to iPhone

Jim Bagley – the man behind such ZX Spectrum classics as *Cabal*, *Hudson Hawk* and *Midnight Resistance* – has joined the rapidly expanding ranks of veteran coders flocking to create games for Apple's iPhone. Published by his new studio Found in the Future, Bagley's first iOS effort goes by the name of *i3*, and it's an intriguing cube-based puzzler that is well worth a look if you're after a brain-busting App Store download.



» EA unleashes a new Ultima

There's no smoke without fire, and EA's recent and rather heavy-handed moves to shut down the vast network of fan-made tributes to *Ultima IV* – to which the company still owns the rights – was indeed due to the fact that it has just released a brand new browser MMORPG called *Lords of Ultima*. We just discovered this news literally as we went to press, so expect more information next issue.



» New iOS studio rises from the ashes of Bizarre Creations

When Bizarre Creations finally closed its doors recently we shed a tear. Thankfully there's some good news on the horizon, as former staffers Peter Collier, Ben Ward and Stephen Cakebread have set up iOS studio Hogrocket. It's worth noting that Cakebread is the man behind *Geometry Wars*, a fact that has us eyeing Hogrocket's future output with interest.

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *CVG*. I led the *CVG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of CVG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

Winner Stays On (and gets £100 in Vouchers)

Writing these columns is like therapy for me. This month I'm investigating my moth-to-a-flame fascination with videogame tournaments and their heroes great and small.

The man-versus-machine fascination with computer games probably dates back to 'computer thrashes chess grandmaster' headlines of the 1980s. Or mine does. And since those dark times I've held the likes of Julian 'Jazza' Rignall (*Defender* champion) and even oddball Billy Mitchell (reigning-defeated-reigning-defeated-reigning king of *Donkey Kong*) in the highest regard.

As you know, I still have a soft spot for that soppy movie *The Wizard,* in which a nervous kid shows how to really play *Super Mario Bros. 3* before an arena audience in California. Which is why, in the 1990s while working on *CVG* magazine, I was especially proud of our HMV/CVG Challenge that invited UK gamers to tame the likes of *Ridge Racer 4* and *Starfox 64* in front of local crowds.

So I suppose we're back to appreciating games that stand to be defeated instead of 'experiences' where the challenge is to be completed. The latter is a recent phenomenon introduced to avoid scaring people away from playing, and losing. Everybody wins. Well done. Not even a Legendary ending for *Halo Reach* (though a special Achievement instead, fair enough). Nobody wants to hurt your feelings anymore. Blame Kirby (but not too harshly).

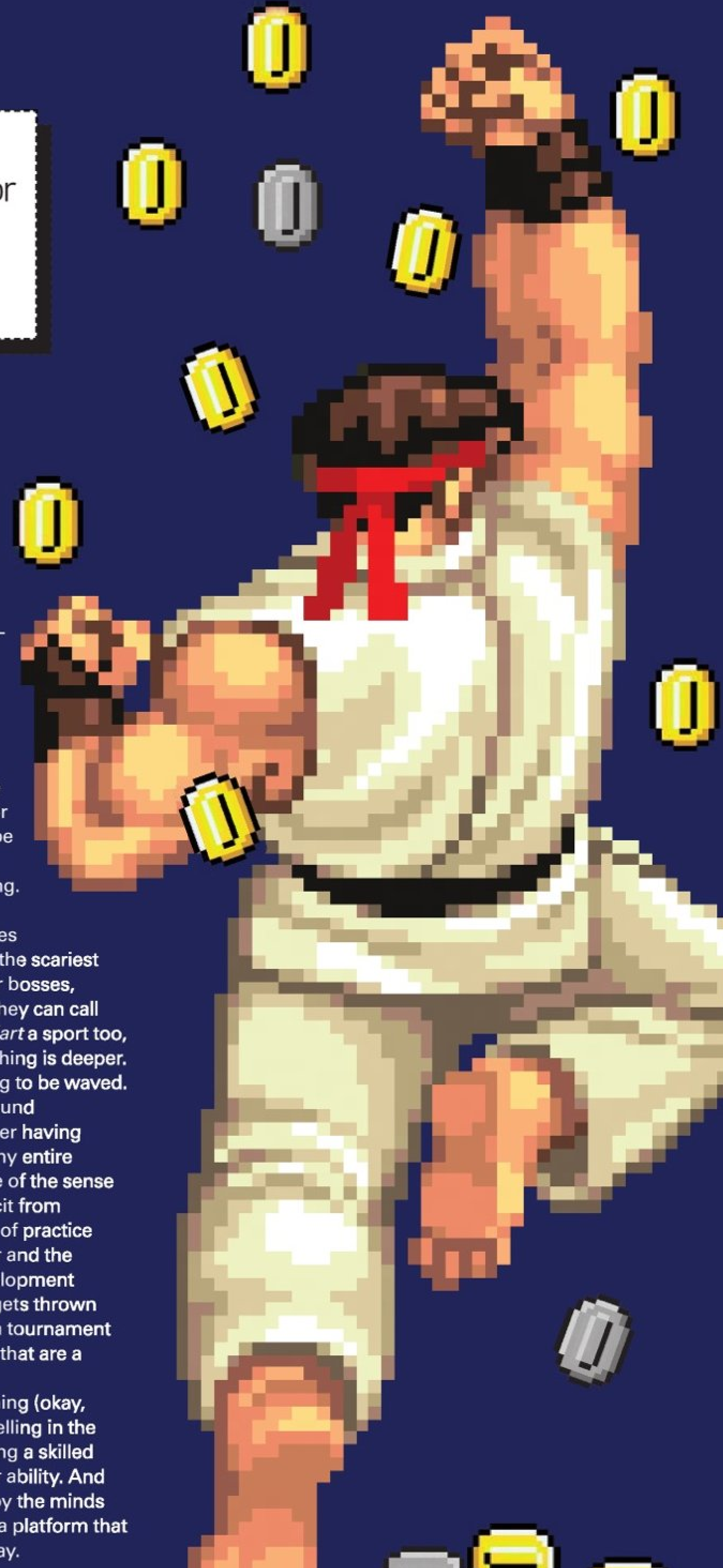
So thank goodness for the growth of man-versus-man-via-machine tournaments that began in earnest with *Street Fighter II*. And speaking of hurting feelings, you have to be forever grateful to Capcom for pioneering a situation in which the dying seconds of a head-to-head could bring hundreds of gamers to their feet, totally unscripted, to whoop and cheer Daigo Umehara, as he ripped apart rival Justin Wong having mastered the art of parrying in *Street Fighter III: Third Strike*.

I was going to say 'absolutely mastered' but basically you've either mastered something or you haven't. Probably 80 per cent of **Retro Gamer** readers have seen that clip; if not, just search for 'Daigo vs Justin Wong' on YouTube and check out the file – it has had 2,500,000 views and is still climbing.

We've all sat around in the pub at the magic hour pondering games as art, the bits that made you cry, the scariest moments, toughest bosses, unfair bosses, games as a recognised sport – if they can call poker a sport, that makes *Mario Kart* a sport too, right? Yeah! But this tournament thing is deeper. It's the beating heart, not just a flag to be waved.

The reason I'm still hanging around tournament meetings despite never having entered or won such an event in my entire average-skilled lifetime is because of the sense of respect and dedication they elicit from me. From the thousands of hours of practice invested by each and every player and the many sleepless nights of the development teams whose latest masterpiece gets thrown to the pack and left to survive. In a tournament situation, nobody touches games that are a waste of time.

For me, there is absolutely nothing (okay, just 'nothing' – sorry) more compelling in the world of videogames than watching a skilled player perform at the peak of their ability. And it's because I am equally floored by the minds responsible for establishing such a platform that can unite gamers in such a real way.



In a tournament situation, nobody touches games that are a waste of time

FUN WITH LEARNING

WE INTERVIEW BRINSWORTH VIDEOGAME FESTIVAL'S MARK HARDISTY ABOUT HIS NEW RETRO EVENT

Who would have thought that classic videogames would start appearing in the local school curriculum? Mark Hardisty explains why learning about British games is so important to today's youth.

■ Retro Gamer: Tell us about this new event you are organising…
Mark Hardisty: Brinsworth's Videogame Festival pays homage to exhibitions such as Videogame Nation, REPLAY and GameOn to celebrate British ingenuity and innovation in the videogame industry, and brings the benefit of games-based learning into the classroom. It is a week's worth of keynote speakers, special guests, workshops and game playing.

■ RG: Why is it being held at the Comprehensive School Academy where you work?
MH: The school recognises the festival will provide an opportunity to engage students from across the curriculum. Delivering unique, innovative and inspiring opportunities is at the heart of learning. The science, technology and art in games draw from a wealth of talent, delivered by great collaborative work. The project strives to help students witness these connections and enjoy broadening their knowledge.

■ RG: What are you planning on having at the event in terms of games and systems?
MH: We have a vintage hardware room with over 30 different platforms, ranging from British manufacturers such as the ZX-81, BBC Micro and Amstrad CPC464 to those from other shores such as Game Boy, Dreamcast, N64, SNES and PS2. All of the games running will be from British developers – apart from the Vectrex, as we're struggling to find any! We also have 70 PCs that will be running various British and overseas games and several zones, including an Emulator and Indie Zone.

■ RG: What special guests will feature at the event?
MH: The first event stars SUMO Digital, Commodore 64 music legend Ben Daglish, and Jacob Habgood, Senior Lecturer in Games Development at Sheffield Hallam University and former Infogrames programmer. Our second event, planned for the autumn, will include the brilliant Mark Knight, BAFTA award-winning sound editor at Codemasters and member of SID80s, game designer and script writer Nana Nielson, and Gremlin Graphics legend Peter Harrap.

I must also mention fantastic support from Charles Cecil of Revolution Software, Mark Morris at Introversion Software, Gordon Sinclair at CGEU, Jesper Holm Olsen of Press Play On Tape, Jon Himoff of Quest History and pixel artist Gary Lucken.

■ RG: Why is it important to teach kids about videogames?



» The IT team, Dave Orridge, Mark Hardisty and Chris Ash pose with a selection of British Hardware.



» [Spectrum] We've tried to get hold of Monty Mole creator Peter Harrap for years. Hopefully this will be a good opportunity to try again.

MH: The British videogame industry (and Sheffield's in particular) continues to play a significant role in an international interest. I don't think this is widely known! The legacy and influence that British developers such as Ben, Peter, Charles Cecil, Richard and David Darling, The Oliver Twins, David Braben, Jon Hare, Toby Gard, Sam Houser (the list is endless) have brought to the world needs to be recognised and celebrated.

How many of our pupils know that *Grand Theft Auto* is developed in Edinburgh, or *LittleBigPlanet* in London, or that *Tomb Raider* is from Derby? I am sure that many of our students don't even realise that SUMO Digital is only three miles away, but I suspect many have played *Virtua Tennis*, *Outrun: Coast 2 Coast* or the latest *BBC Dr Who Adventures*.

■ RG: How much will tickets cost and when will the event take place?
MH: The event is completely free to all students at Brinsworth – about 1450 pupils. We will be inviting other Rotherham and Sheffield schools to come and take part in certain workshops, starting with the visit by Steve Lycett of SUMO Digital and Mark Knight of Codemasters.

The first festival runs between 27 June and 1 July 2011. *

* WHAT WE THINK

Darran



I think this is a fantastic idea. Anything that teaches today's generation about the importance of British developers and the general history of gaming is immensely important. Here's hoping it becomes a yearly event and starts reaching more schools in the future.

Stuart



I'm so disappointed that this event isn't open to the general public that I'm thinking of digging out my blazer and shorts, putting a catapult in my back pocket and trying to sneak in as an undergraduate. It's a great idea though, and pleasing to see.

David

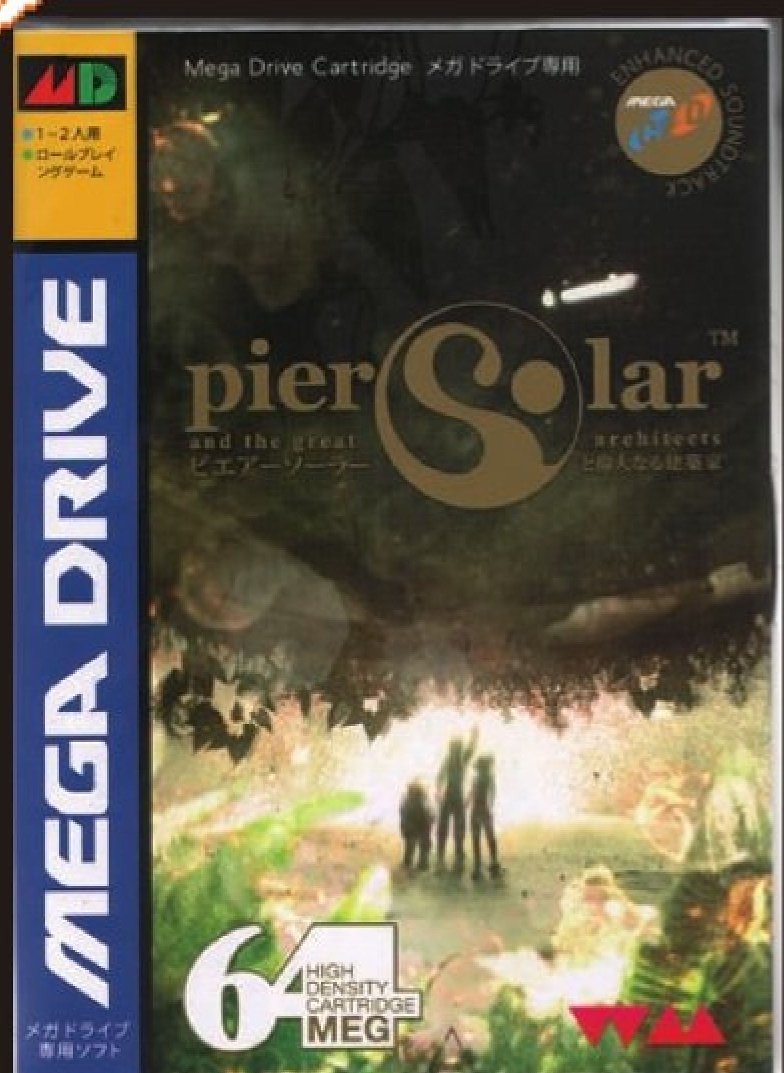


Why weren't things like this taught when I was at school? We had to make do with playing *Granny's Garden* instead. As the other chaps have said, this is an interesting approach to gaming and it's nice to see Videogame Nation proving to be a bit of an inspiration to others.

THE VAULT

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO CHEST

TREASURE OF THE MONTH



Pier Solar And The Great Architects – Repackaged

- **RRP:** $45
- **Buy it from:** www.piersolar.com

Just missing out on appearing in our review section this month was this lavishly repackaged copy of *Pier Solar,* which landed on our doormat with an angelic thud.

A joint labour of love by WaterMelon Development and many passionate Sega enthusiasts from Eidolon's Inn's popular forum The Tavern, *Pier Solar*, the largest RPG to ever grace Sega's black beauty, was six years in the making. Completed in 2009, the game quickly sold out as fans rushed to get their hands on and play the impressive homebrew/fan project.

Now rereleased in a beautifully packaged box, inside contains a copy of the game pressed on a 64-meg *Mega Drive* cart (which is just all sorts of geeky awesomeness), an enhanced Mega CD stereo soundtrack, which can be used in conjunction with the cartridge to enhance the music in the game (a unique feature never before seen in any Mega Drive game), and a poster and a sticker set too, not to mention some epic retro RPG gaming to enjoy. Expect a full review from us next month.



iCade Cabinet

- **RRP:** $99.99
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

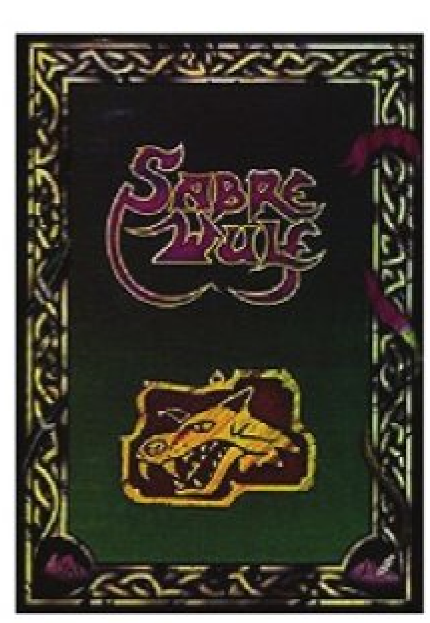
Currently still in the production stage, with an release date of early June this year currently listed on ThinkGeek's website, these stylish-looking arcade decks allow you to gently slot your iPad into their cradles and begin some pure retro arcade gaming using the device's authentic arcade stick and fire buttons, all via the very un-retro power of Bluetooth. In addition to this, ThinkGeek will be releasing an API for the iCADE that will enable iOS developers to create games that are compatible with the device, and Atari has also pledged its support for the cabinets too. If you're reading this ThinkGeek, please send us one to review.

8-bit Flower Bouquet

- **RRP:** $14.99
- **But it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

The problem with flowers is that most smell like gorilla's pee, they're expensive, high maintenance and die after about four minutes… unless you preserve them with a high level of maintenance, of course. Therefore, we think that they're a burden you should never really push onto a loved one. But look, we don't write the magazine of love, we write the one of retro games, and so take anything we say with a fist of salt. But we think we've found the ultimate solution – pixelated flowers. Requiring no watering or sunlight, they stand 13 inches high, smell good, and should last forever.





Sabre Wulf (Spectrum)

- **RRP:** £9.95
- **Buy it from:** www.retro-play.co.uk

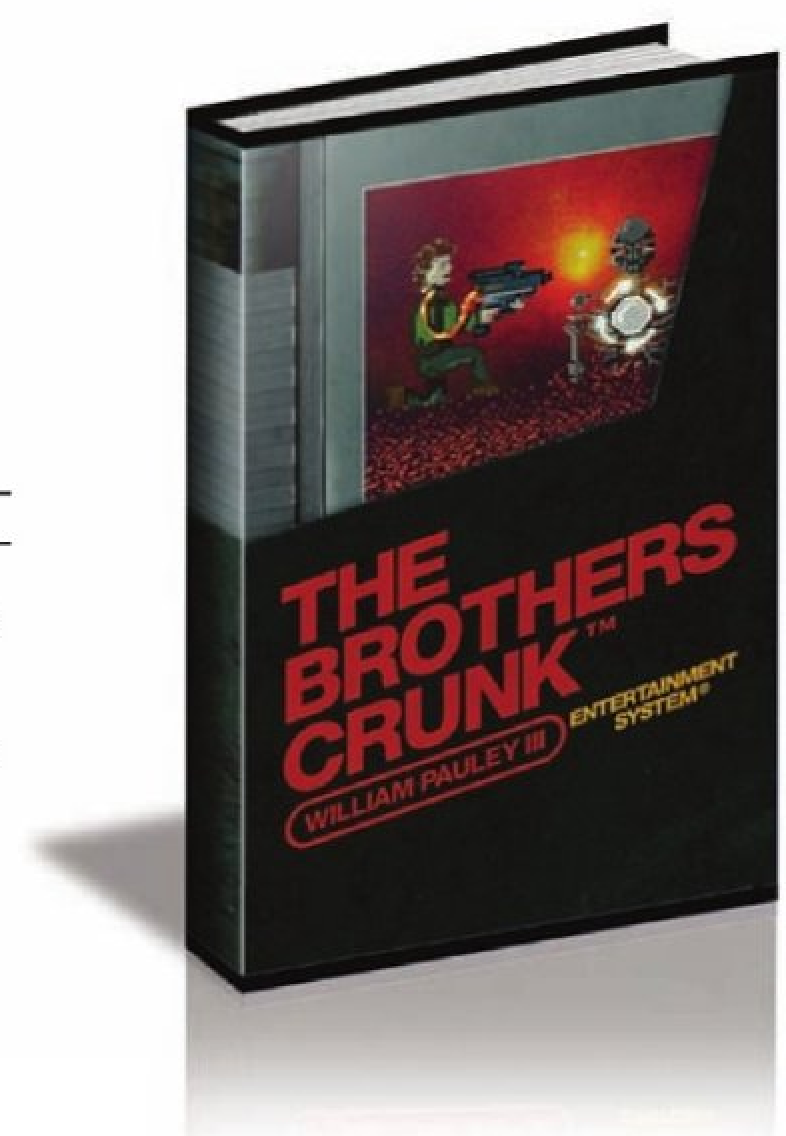
Being the huge Ultimate fans that we are, we were tempted to buy this item ourselves this month. It's an original copy of the adventure game classic *Sabre Wulf*, complete with box and instruction manual. However, we figured that if we did buy it then we would only have to purge all the 50 or so words we hadn't yet written about it for this section. Also, we're a bit skint too, and we already own the game anyway – although to be fair that didn't dawn on us until about a week a later. But anyway, this is *Sabre Wulf*, and it's pretty darn good.



Cassette Tape T-Shirt

■ **RRP:** £15.95
■ **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

If the *Space Invaders* hoodie does nothing for you then maybe a something a bit more subtle, like a cassette tape, might. On our side of the pond, RetroGT has a fantastic range of shirts, with many in keeping with 8-bit Brit microcomputer scene, as this T-Shirt here demonstrates quite aptly. There is simply no format more retro in look than a cassette tape; for a time it was a pirate's weapon of choice and as well as playing games could also play music too. Why not pay your respects with this shirt?



The Brothers Crunk

■ **RRP:** $9.95
■ **Buy it from:** www.grindhousepress.com

If cowboy/film director Robert Rodriguez was a retro gamer (and we don't know, he might well be) this novella is the exact kind of crazy, insane material he could probably direct in his sleep. It tells the tale of two brothers, the titular Crunk ones, who are scratching a living in the post-apocalyptic world where videogame accessories can be used as real weapons. When the duo find the remains of an old robot in a desert, one of them gets transformed into something monstrous, triggering chapter after chapter of increasingly absurd events. Suffice to say, *The Road* it most certainly isn't.



Beheaded T-Shirt

■ **RRP:** $24
■ **Buy it from:** www.meatbun.us

Meat Bun has been toying with everyone's emotions by saying that it will be releasing a new line of retro gaming shirts for absolutely ages, and every week we check the website, read their excellent blog, and still nothing. Still, we haven't actually covered all their old shirts yet and this is one of our favourites. It depicts Simon Belmont holding Dracula's head. We just love the image, art style and subtlety – even if, let's be honest, that could be anyone there holding Dracula's head, even Conan. Sadly, Dracula's eyes don't glow in the dark, but we don't think they did in real life anyway.

TOP FIVE T-SHIRTS



01 Beheaded T-shirt
■ **RRP:** $24 (approx £16)
■ **Manufacturer:** Meat Bun
■ **Buy it from:** meatbun.us/store/



02 Amstrad
■ **RRP:** £14.95
■ **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
■ **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com



03 Sonic Power-ups
■ **RRP:** $14.95 (approx £10)
■ **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
■ **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

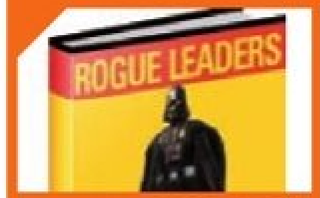


04 Coexist T-shirt
■ **RRP:** $15.99 - $17.99
■ **Manufacturer:** Thinkgeek.com
■ **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



05 Dizzy
■ **RRP:** £14.95
■ **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
■ **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

TOP FIVE BOOKS



01 Rogue Leaders: The Story Of LucasArts
■ **RRP:** £34.99 ■ **Publisher:** Titan Books
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



02 Classic Home Video Games 1985-1988 ■ **RRP:** $55 (approx £34)
■ **Author:** Brett Weiss
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.com



03 Racing The Beam
■ **RRP:** £14.95
■ **Publisher:** MIT Press
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



04 Game Over
■ **RRP:** £22.14
■ **Publisher:** Cyberactive Media Group
■ **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



05 Gamespite Quarterly: Issue 3
■ **RRP:** From $12 ■ **Author:** Jeremy Parish
■ **Buy it from:** www.gamespite.com

TOP FIVE MISCELLANEOUS



01 Mega Drive Card Holder
■ **RRP:** $34.10 (approx £21)
■ **Manufacturer:** Banpresto
■ **Buy it from:** www.strapya-world.com



02 Grow Your Own Moai Statue (aka DOH)
■ **RRP:** $5.99 (£4)
■ **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



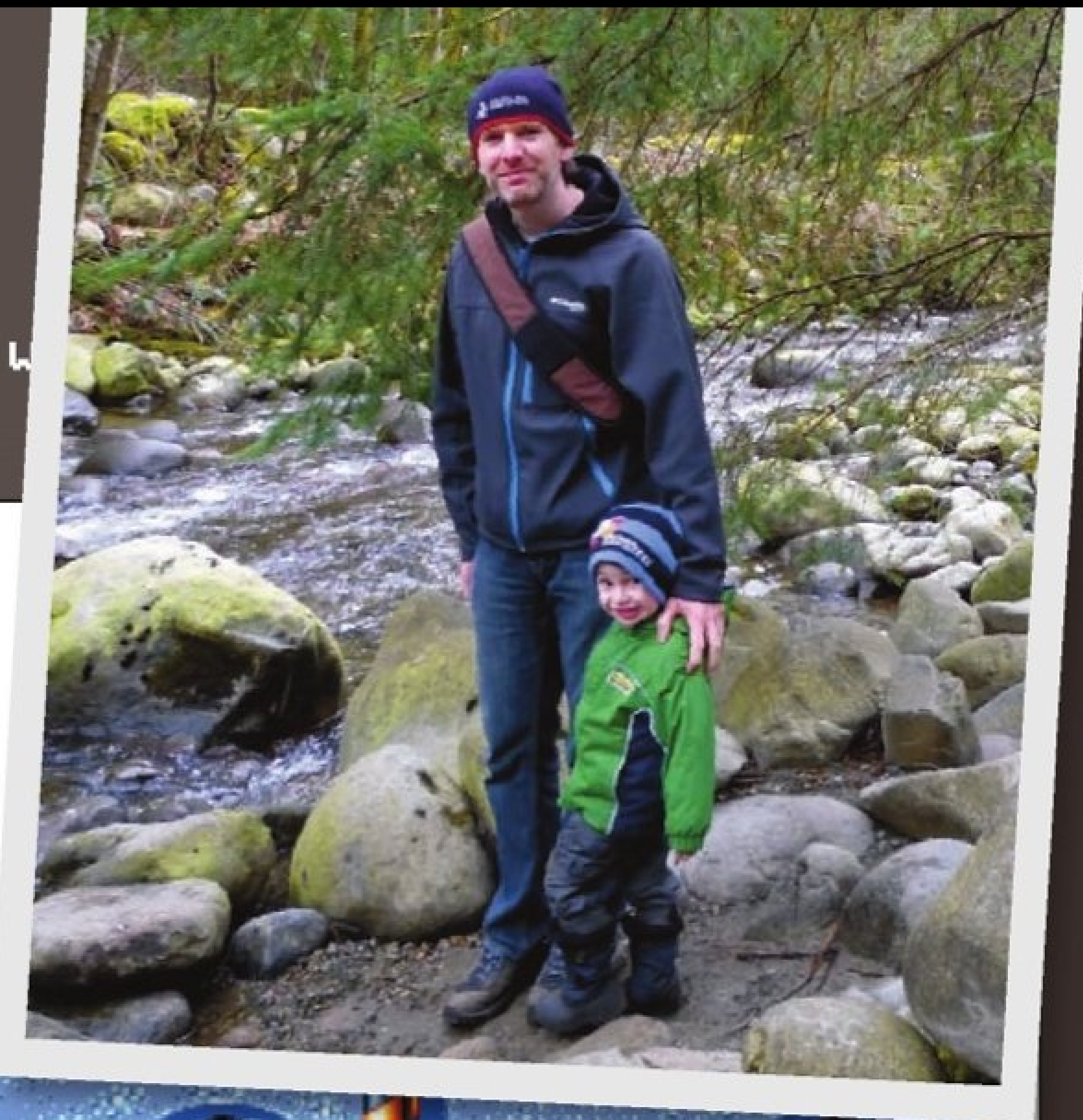
03 Retro Videogame Propaganda Posters
■ **RRP:** £33 ■ **Manufacturer:** Steven Thomas ■ **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



04 Headcrab Plushie
■ **RRP:** $24.99 (approx £16)
■ **Manufacturer:** Unknown
■ **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



05 Namco Dioramas
■ **RRP:** £5
■ **Manufacturer:** Namco
■ **Buy it from:** www.japantrendshop.com



*A MOMENT WITH...

Chris Sorrell

This month, the man behind James Pond and Sir Daniel Fortesque tells Damien McFerran about the ups and downs of his career

Who is Chris Sorrell?

He's the creative genius behind *James Pond* and *MediEvil*, and oversaw development at Millennium Interactive in the Nineties. He's recently founded his own independent studio.

Which of your games would you recommend to our readers?
James Pond 2 and *MediEvil* are the two I'm most proud of – I think they both reflect the dedication that went into their development, as opposed to other projects where no less hard work failed to find quite the same 'magic'.

What's your proudest memory from your time in the industry?
It would have to be when we were showing *MediEvil* at the Atlanta E3 in '98. I was heading out to catch the convention centre's shuttle bus on the first morning and was amazed to see it adorned with *MediEvil* artwork.

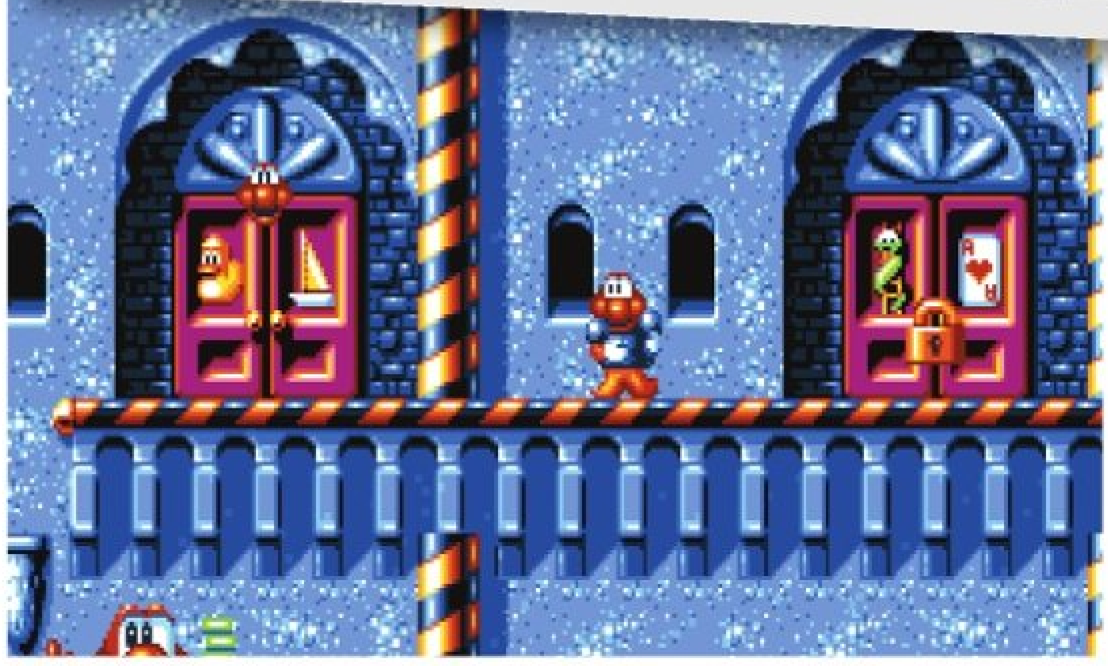
What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
For every game: deadlines. There's always about ten times as much that you want to do as there is time to do it. In modern development, hitting dates has become about throwing ridiculous numbers of people at a project and/or gutting features as deadlines approach. Neither tends to make for a great end result.

Which industry veteran do you admire the most and why?
There are many, but to pick just one, I'd probably say Tim Schafer. I love games that exude humour and personality; his games are second to none in those regards. *Day Of The Tentacle* is one of my all-time favourites.

How would you like to be remembered?
Quirky personality, sense-of-humour and attention-to-detail are things I always try to include in a game. I love seeing people still talking about these old titles on Facebook pages and the like; I believe these are some of the traits, which help to make a game truly memorable.

Which game do you wish you'd made?
I don't think there's one single game... I'd love to have come up with the high concept for *Zelda: Majora's Mask* or *Grim Fandango*, or had a hand in the beauty of *Ico*, the immersion of *Half-Life* or the sense of exploration and wonderment of the original *Tomb Raider* (to name a few).

What's your darkest memory of being in the video game industry?
For me, the darkest days have been when time's running out, you can't physically work any more hours, and you know the game simply isn't where it should be. This is especially soul-destroying when you've spent two years or more working on something that could have been great. *Primal* was an example of that, *24: The Game* even more so.



» [Mega Drive] Underwater agent James Pond also made a cameo in EA action-platformer *Rolo To The Rescue* in 1992.

And your best?
The best times are when you find yourself working with truly like-minded people – you're able to feed off of each others' enthusiasm and differing skills to really make fun stuff happen.



How has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
This used to be such a creative, dynamic, and exciting industry; there might be long hours but you worked them because the creative rewards were huge, and you had the opportunity to shape a project in a broad way. Nowadays – for big-budget development at least – the creative opportunities are few and far between, you're likely working on just a tiny facet of a project, and long hours are mandated by a desperate hope to keep your project alive and not see it (or your studio) shut down on seemingly arbitrary boardroom whim. The modern indie scene is as vibrant and exciting as mainstream development used to be. I left the 'safety' of a triple-A studio to start my own indie venture: SpoonSized Entertainment. Whether it'll pay the bills remains to be seen, but it feels – in a good way – like my career has come full circle. I'm back to loving my job once more! *





retrodiary

29 April – 26 May

>> A month of retro events both past and present

29 April 1994
■ Commodore International is declared bankrupt. Escom, a German PC company, later buys the brand name.

29 April 2005
■ *Star Fox: Assault*, the fourth *Starfox* game and only available on the Nintendo Gamecube, is released in the UK.



2 May 1983
■ *Molar Maul*, one of Imagine Software's early games for the Sinclair Spectrum, is released.



2 May 1985
■ Amstrad releases the CPC664, a 464 with built-in disk drive. It is quickly replaced by the CPC6128, causing consternation among 664 owners.



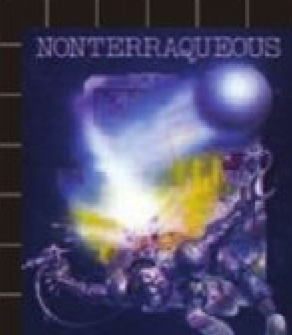
9 May 1986
■ Commodore's newest computer, the Amiga, is officially unveiled in the UK at the Commodore Show.



6 May 2011
■ 13 years on, *Guilty Gear* is still going strong. *Accent Core Plus* features 25 characters and is available for PSP and Wii.



6 May 1985
■ The absurdly titled yet strangely playable budget game, *Nonterraqueous*, is released on the Spectrum by Mastertronic.



5 May 1993
■ Psygnosis, formed from the ruins of Imagine Software, is acquired by Sony to develop titles for its forthcoming PlayStation.



10 May 1999
■ Classic Game Boy games *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* are released across Europe.



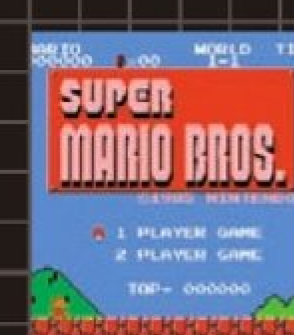
11 May 1995
■ The Sega Saturn is launched in the USA, six months after its Japanese debut. Yours for just $349.



13 May 1996
■ *Super Mario RPG: Legend Of The Seven Stars* is released in the US on the Nintendo 64. There was no European release.



15 May 1997
■ *Super Mario Bros.* on the NES is released in the UK. It has sold over 40 million units worldwide. Ker-ching!



22 May 1980
■ *Pac Man* is introduced to arcades filled with an unsuspecting Japanese public by Namco. An icon is born.



20 May 1983
■ MB Games launches vector graphic console the Vectrex in the UK.



17 May 1999
■ Lucasarts releases *Star Wars Episode 1: Racer* on the N64 across Europe. Utini!



17 May 1989
■ Tengen releases *Tetris* on the NES despite Nintendo threatening legal action with its own conversion ready for release.



22 May 2000
■ Rare's classic first-person shooter *Perfect Dark* makes its worldwide debut in the US of A on the Nintendo 64.

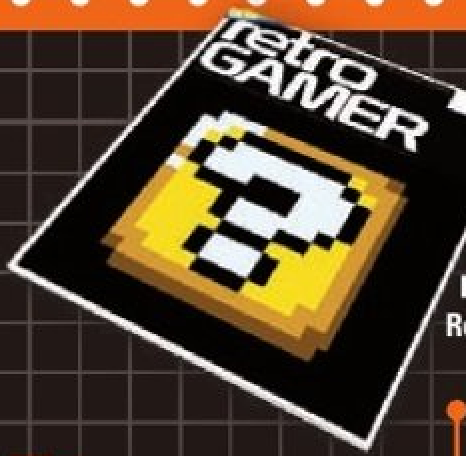


23 May 2010
■ Gaming perfection is almost attained with the worldwide debut release of *Super Mario Galaxy 2* on the Wii in America.



24 May 1996
■ SNK released the first of its much-loved *Metal Slug* games on the magnificent Neo Geo console.





26 May 2011
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

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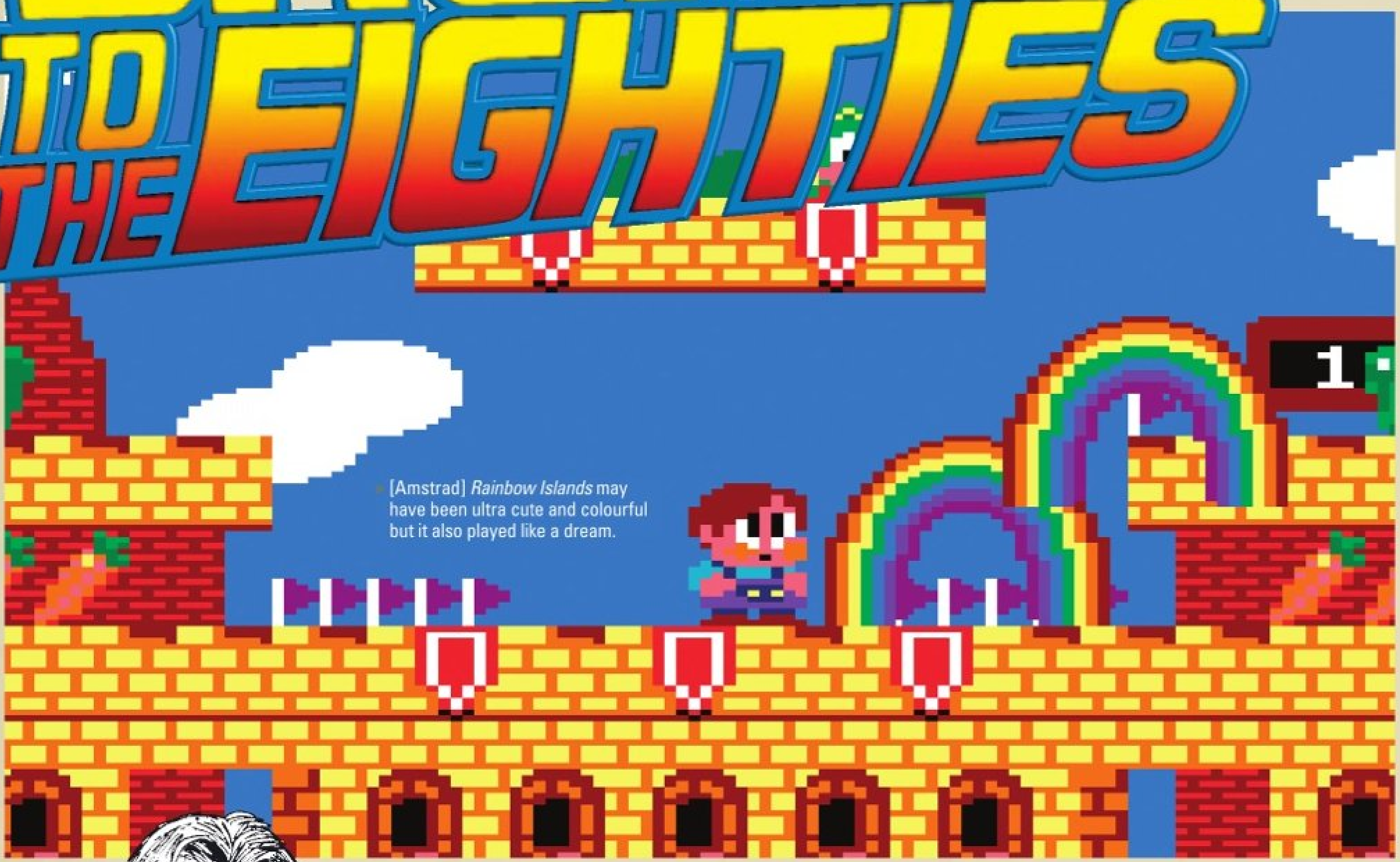


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BACK TO THE EIGHTIES



» [Amstrad] *Rainbow Islands* may have been ultra cute and colourful but it also played like a dream.

CHARTS

JULY 1989

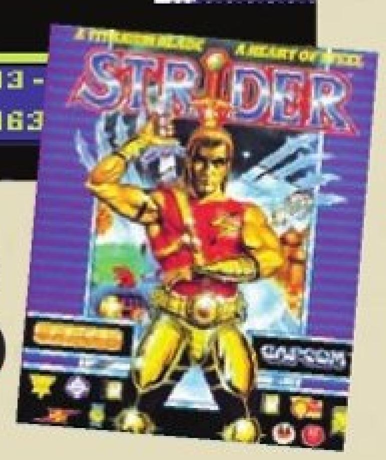


COMMODORE 64

1 RoboCop (Ocean)
2 Emlyn Hughes Soccer (Audiogenic)
3 Dragon Ninja (Ocean)
4 Turbo Esprit (Encore)
5 League Challenge (Atlantis)

» [Commodore 64] *Strider* was a masterpiece in the arcades and a pile of stink on the C64 and Amiga.







THE LATEST NEWS FROM JULY 1989

JULY 1989 – Virgin goes Python, NES owners feel the Power of Glove, it's Life & Death at Mindscape, Ocean sees a Rainbow, 007 is back and Cinemaware has an ant attack. Richard Burton goes to Antescher to get some perspective…

Future Publishing confirmed that *ST/Amiga Format* magazine would end this month after just 13 issues. However, the good news was that the title was to be split, with ST and Amiga owners getting their own dedicated publications. *Amiga Format* proved to be particularly successful, running for 136 issues spanning 13 years, and in its prime had a readership of over 160,000.

Virgin/Mastertronic, fresh from revealing a marketing agreement with Sega reported to be worth £100 million, also found time to announce a tie-in celebrating the 20th anniversary of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

In a celebration of all things Python, the game featured wannabe chartered accountant Gumby trying to find four parts of his brain. Set in four strange yet very different levels, Gumby collect tins of Spam to trade for a section of grey matter. It was a mix of shoot-'em-up and arcade adventure with hints of *Super Mario Bros*, which never really grabbed gamers, although the Python element helped elevate it from being mediocre to amusing but mediocre.

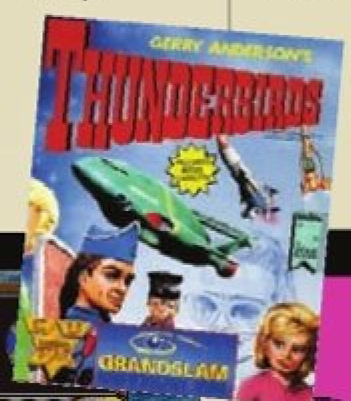
Codemasters and Cheetah Marketing were to combine forces to release a shoot-'em-up pack featuring a lightgun and six Codies games. The Defender lightgun was in direct competition with a similar recently released product, Amstrad's Magnum light phaser, and as a package was £5 cheaper at £24.95. Ultimately both packages proved to be little more than gimmicks, with hardly any support outside the pack-in games.

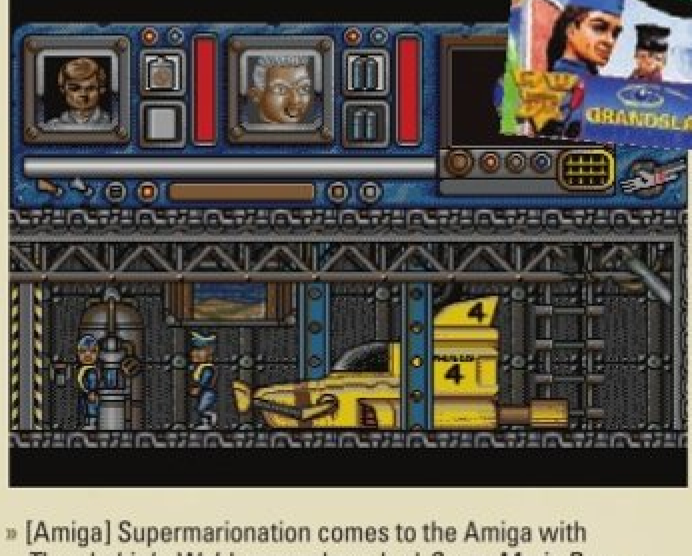
There was more niche controller fun with news of two new NES-related products: the Power Glove and Power Pad. The Power Glove would let you control games by merely twitching your hand, while the latter was a dance mat-style controller. Although different, they suffered the same fate as the lightguns, with a lack of software. However, the Power Pad did come complete with a keep fit cartridge, which monitored your aerobic activity. Sounds a Wii bit familiar…

If blasting, kicking, shooting, puzzling and jumping games were getting tiresome then the latest release from Mindscape could be just what the doctor ordered. *Life And Death* for the PC would let you play doctor and surgeon as you attempt to diagnose patients' ailments with help from an examination and their medical charts.

If required, you could take things further and wield a scalpel, all without fear of O negative squirting in your face. *Life And Death* was something truly unique and deserved all the plaudits it received. The original release even came complete with a surgeon's mask and latex gloves.

With Grandslam's newest game, a home micro version of Gerry Anderson's classic TV show *Thunderbirds*, impressing and making money, it came as no surprise that Anderson and Grandslam revealed plans to convert

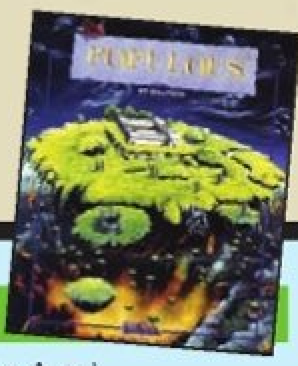




» [Amiga] Supermarionation comes to the Amiga with *Thunderbirds*. We'd sooner have had *Super Mario Bros*…

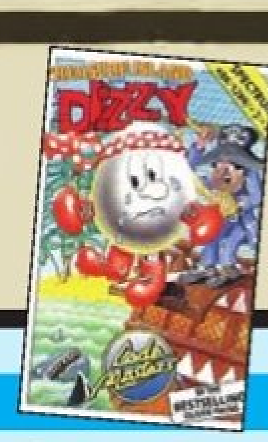


» [Spectrum] Venezuelan beaver cheese? Not today, sir, no…



ATARI ST

1. Populous (Electronic Arts)
2. F-16 Combat Pilot (Digital Integration)
3. War In Middle-earth (Melbourne House)
4. Falcon (Mirrorsoft)
5. Lombard RAC Rally (Mandarin Software)



SPECTRUM

1. Treasure Island Dizzy (Codemasters)
2. RoboCop (Ocean)
3. Cup Football (D&H Games)
4. Turbo Esprit (Encore)
5. Emlyn Hughes Soccer (Audiogenic)



MUSIC

1. You'll Never Stop Me Loving You (Sonia)
2. Back To Life (Soul II Soul)
3. London Nights (London Boys)
4. Swing The Mood (Jive Bunny & The Mastermixers)
5. Song For Whoever (Beautiful South)

JULY 1989 NEWS

26 July saw Robert Tappan Morris become the first person to be prosecuted under the Computer Fraud And Abuse Act after releasing what is thought to be the first instance of a worm virus, the Morris Worm, onto the fledgling internet while working at Cornell University.

The virus was written and released in 1988 and originally intended by Morris to be a means of gauging the size of the internet. However, instead of infecting each system once, a flaw in the coding resulted in the worm infecting each system repeatedly to the point where it was rendered paralysed.



» The last thing you expect to find in your trousers.

Weird Al Yankovic's feature-length movie, *UHF*, premiered on 21 July. Weird Al played jobless George Newman, who suddenly is put in charge of a local television station after his uncle wins the ailing station in a poker game. Much buffoonery ensued…

1 July brought with it a darker movie premiere when Japan introduced us to the world of *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*. Director Shinya Tsukamoto's low-budget black-and-white cyberpunk movie begins with a metal fetishist inserting metal into wounds he has self-inflicted. Obviously…

After being hit by a car, the man is 'killed', while the driver finds a piece of metal stuck in his face, which begins to grow and take over his body, making him become the Iron Man – no, not that one. His girlfriend is killed later in the movie by his hammer action power drill appendage and the finale sees the Iron Man battle the metal fetishist with a shocking conclusion…

another of his shows, *Captain Scarlet*. Sadly the Mysterons must have got to the project developers, as nothing was ever seen of the project again…

Ocean was celebrating with the news that its *RoboCop* game had broken a four-year record by topping the Gallup multiformat software charts for 18 weeks. The previous holder had been the charity compilation *Softaid*, produced by Quicksilva.

There was further good news for fans of coin-ops and the accountants at Ocean with the splendid news that its conversion of *Rainbow Islands* was progressing well, and an early 1990 release looked on the cards. The early previews of the game showed a fast-paced, colourful platform jaunt with oodles of playability. In fact, *Rainbow Islands*, subtitled *The Story Of Bubble Bobble 2*, looked to be every bit as good as *Bubble Bobble* itself.

Domark was currently on its fourth *James Bond* game, and it was ready for release. Bond was back in *Licence To Kill*, and it was arguably the best *Bond* game so far. Featuring six action-packed scenes from the film, the game was an enjoyable top-down shooter with interesting levels and only really suffered from having a severe learning curve. Still, it proved to be a big hit, which prompted Domark to release news that the pixelated Bond would return in *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

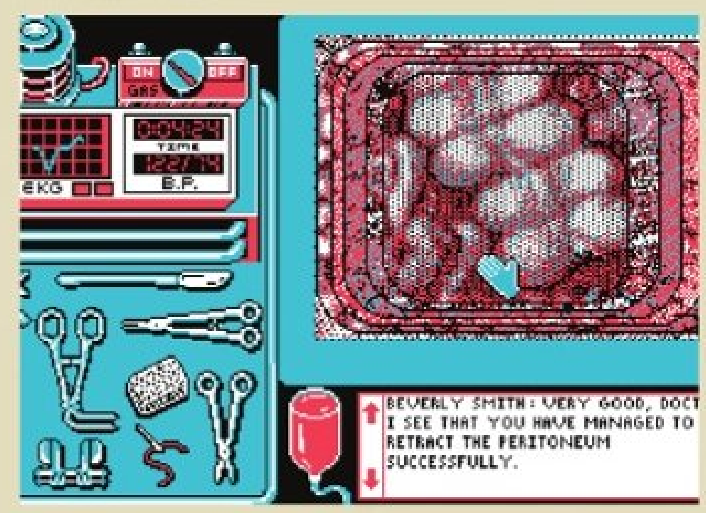


» The Power Glove was to be followed with the Power Pants and Turbo Sock.

The arcade classic *Strider* was undergoing the conversion process thanks to US Gold's agreement with Capcom. The bad news was that the much-maligned Tiertex was handed the task. With a variety of projects already under its belt including such arse as *Street Fighter*, *Rolling Thunder* and *Thunder Blade* for the C64 and Amiga, things didn't bode well…

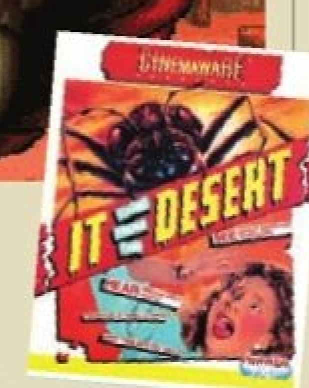
A Cinemaware and Mirrorsoft press release stated that their latest game, *It Came From The Desert*, was finished and ready to ship. The storyline of giant mutated ants scoffing locals in Arizona after a meteor crashes was a technical masterpiece on the Amiga and PC. The B-movie influence was pitched just right so that the eerie atmosphere wasn't tainted by the cheesiness of the storyline. The superbly polished game was also mooted to be available for the C64 and Atari ST but sadly never emerged on either.

» [PC] It's time to operate again and this time you might even put the patient to sleep…



» [Amiga] *It Came From The Desert* had everything: great atmosphere and giant ants trying to nosh on your head.

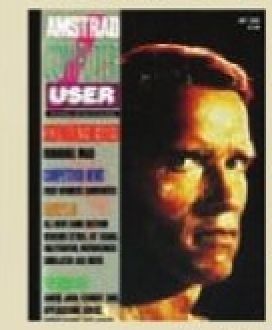




The *Computer & Video Games* reviewers served up an impressive cross-section of creamy gaming goodness with the Amiga and Spectrum featuring strongly. The choicest cuts on the *CVG* menu included *Phobia* (Imageworks/Mirrorsoft, C64), *Datastorm* (Visionary Design, Amiga), *Silkworm* (Virgin Games, Spectrum), *Chicago 30s* (US Gold, C64), *Honda RVF* (Microstyle, Atari ST), *Archipelagos* (Logotron, Amiga), *Black Tiger* (US Gold, Atari ST), *Test Drive II* (Accolade, PC), *Vigilante* (US Gold, Spectrum), *Zork Zero* (Activision/Infocom, Amiga), *Rick Dangerous* (Firebird, Spectrum), *Super Mario Bros 2* (Nintendo, NES) and *Xybots* (Domark, Spectrum).

THIS MONTH IN…

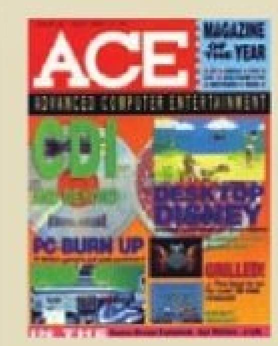
AMSTRAD COMPUTER USER



ACU took a look at comic adaptations, highlighting some of the more recent successes and failures. *2000 AD* was a prime source, with Piranha's attempt to bring *Halo Jones* and *Judge Death* to us emphasised once again.



ACE



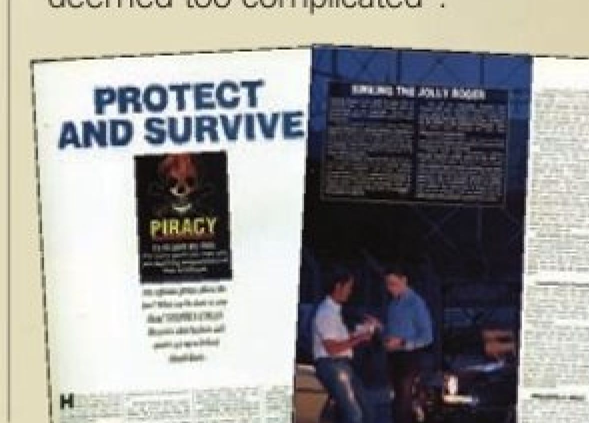
ACE looked into the formats of the future. Multiple processors, smart cards and hard drives were all mentioned, although one developer was surprised to see the UK persevering with cassettes for software when disks were standard in the rest of the world.



ST/AMIGA FORMAT



The problem of software piracy was highlighted, showing how the law was struggling with these crimes. In Scotland, one case of software piracy had reportedly been dropped as "the case was deemed too complicated".



BACK TO THE NINETIES



» [Mega Drive] What'cha gonna do, brother, when gamma radiation runs wild on you?



» [Mega Drive] With *Aladdin*, Disney and Virgin produced a beautiful platformer with one superb rug ride…



» [Amiga] Awesomely crafted graphics matched only by *Elfmania*'s awesome lack of gameplay.



THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1993

DECEMBER 1993 – Impact heading for crash, Elfmania gets a kicking, Hulk and Spider-Man go gaming, Lost Vikings get lost again and the Empire Strikes Back. Richard Burton goes for a warm sleep in Tauntaun innards…

Gallup, the company responsible for collating the monthly software charts, announced that from next month the figures would be more accurate. Whereas Gallup would normally scrutinise the sales from 842 retail outlets, that figure was being upped to a much more impressive 2,521, which would include branches of Comet, Argos and Tandy. What that tells us is the charts have never been accurate as a definitive gauge of sales…

Impact Magazines had a bit of a Christmas shocker up its sleeve with the news that issue 6 of *Sega Master Force* would be the last. After the split of the original *Sega Force* magazine into two parts, the other half being *Sega Force Mega*, it was thought that the individual magazines would prosper better as single entities.

Sadly, a downturn in the Master System's popularity marked the end of the magazine. That said, *Sega Force Mega* only lasted one further issue, and popularity couldn't be blamed on that occasion. Impact only had a few more weeks in it before it would be closed down too.

With it being Christmas time, what more could any self-respecting gamer want than a *Street Fighter II*-style beat-'em-up featuring elves? At least Renegade thought so and was ready to release *Elfmania*, an Amiga-only affair and an extraordinarily beautiful game with stunning graphics and smooth, multilayered parallax scrolling.

Alas, the budget must have been mainly given to the graphics department, as the gameplay proved to be rather laboured. Problems with the character movement and no feeling of power behind any of your punches crippled any chances of *Elfmania* being considered great.

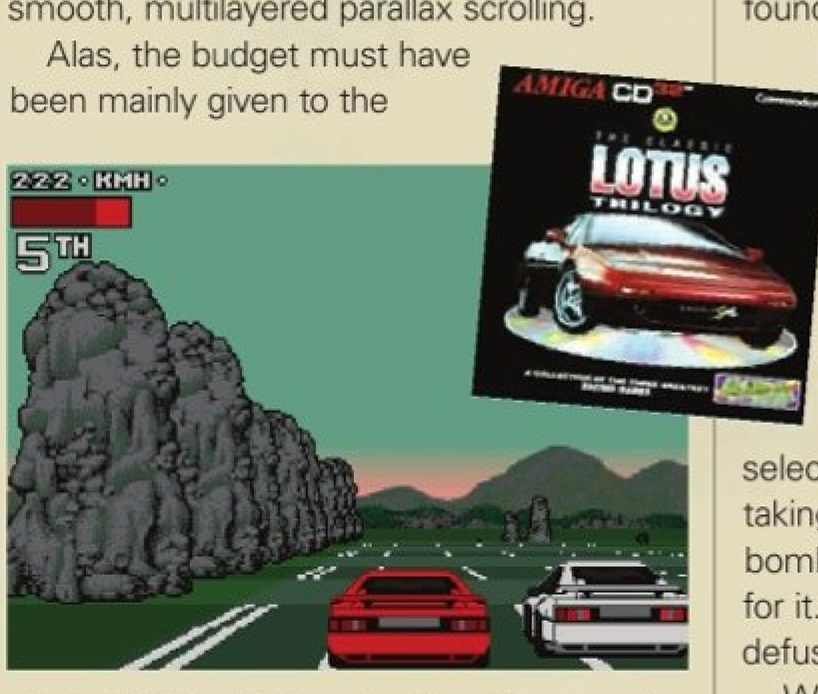
US Gold was hoping for a Christmas release for its game based on Marvel Comics' *The Incredible Hulk*. Unfortunately it missed this prime sales slot and it was let loose to rampage through videogame stores in the summer of '94. Sadly, even the fantastic character of the Hulk wouldn't be enough to save the game from mind-numbing mediocrity. Sega Mega Drive, Master System and Game Gear owners found the five-level platform beat-'em-up to be uninspired and run-of-the-mill.

Sega was also delving into Marvel territory with a Sega Mega-CD release, *Spider-Man vs The Kingpin*. It had previously appeared on various other Sega consoles, but the Mega-CD version was much enhanced with new levels, a wider range of moves and a new selection of bosses. The game saw Spidey taking on the Kingpin, who had planted a bomb in the city and blamed Spider-Man for it. Our web-slinging hero must find and defuse it, and clear his name in the process.

With plenty of fighting action with some of his villainous foes such as Doc



» [SNES] Similar gameplay, three lost Vikings and two new playable characters: a werewolf and a dragon.



» [Amiga CD32] Gremlin released its trilogy of *Lotus* games in one package, and CD32 owners celebrated wildly…

DECEMBER 1993 NEWS



» One of Hubble's incredible pictures: the massive Sombrero galaxy – 50,000 light years across.

4 December saw the death of moustachioed musical genius Frank Zappa at the age of 53 from prostate cancer. The prolific composer and singer released over 60 albums with his band The Mothers Of Invention, and was hugely influential.

On 9 December NASA's space mission to repair faults to the Hubble Space Telescope, including the main mirror, ended successfully. The 11-day mission included the longest spacewalk ever when Jeff Hoffman and Story Musgrave spent 7 hours and 21 minutes unfurling the solar panels that powered the telescope.



» "A composer is a guy who goes around forcing his will on unsuspecting air molecules, often with the assistance of unsuspecting musicians."

The major fault on the $1.5 billion project was the telescope's mirror lens was too flat, making it unable to focus. A corrective lens was created and installed by the astronauts, allowing us to see incredible pictures of distant stars and galaxies.

25 December brought the premiere of *Batman: Mask Of The Phantasm*. The critically acclaimed animation saw Batman joined in Gotham by a vigilante dispensing mobsters. This mysterious figure is mistaken for Batman, who becomes a wanted man… and then the Joker appears on the scene. The movie attracted some high-profile voice artists, including Mark Hamill voicing the Joker. He would make the character his own and voice it many more times, including the *Batman: Arkham Asylum* videogame.

Octopus, Sandman and Venom, and some lovely, detailed graphics, *Spider-Man vs The Kingpin* captured the essence and feel of the comics very well.

The quirky co-operative platformer *The Lost Vikings* on the SNES was a deserved hit, so predictably Interplay revealed that a second outing was under development and progressing well, with Silicon & Synapse, which later became Blizzard Entertainment, once again doing the coding.

The Lost Vikings 2: Norse By Norsewest would feature similar gameplay to the original but with the inclusion of two new playable characters: Scorch the dragon and Fang the werewolf. *Lost Vikings 2* was released on the SNES and two years later on the PlayStation and Sega Saturn.

A long time ago in a development studio far, far away, LucasArts and JVC had been busily working on the sequel to their hit SNES game, *Super Star Wars*, which was still riding high in the software charts. This month finally saw the release of *Super Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*.

You can control Luke, Han or Chewbacca as you battle your way through the familiar scenarios from the movie. So expect a meeting with Boba Fett on the Cloud City, a search for Yoda in the Dagobah swamps and a duel or two with Darth Vader. Also, the Mode 7 vehicle stages were exceptionally good, allowing you the opportunity to battle AT-AT walkers in your Snowspeeder, fly X-Wings around Cloud City and manoeuvre the Millennium Falcon through an asteroid field. Strong in this one, the Force is…





» [SNES] All the flavoursome goodness of *Star Wars* but without the nasty Jar Jar Binks aftertaste…

With Commodore's Amiga CD32 console reportedly selling well in stores – helped this month in no small part by John Menzies' decision to stock the machine in all of its 274 outlets – Gremlin Graphics announced that it would be releasing two of its earlier successes with extra enhancements: *Zool*, and *Lotus Trilogy*, a collection of all three of Gremlin's previous *Lotus* games, all of which were excellent.

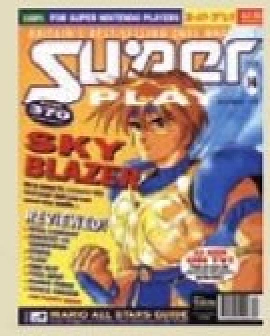
While *Lotus Trilogy* was undoubtedly the must-have release, *Zool* never really delivered on its promises of being enhanced. However, *Zool 2* was released on the CD32 a few months later.

In magazine-reviewing land, *Amiga Force* gave a hearty back slap to *Brutal Sports Series Football* (Millennium), *Universal Military Simulator Compilation* (Mirage), *Disposable Hero* (Gremlin Graphics), *Blob* (Core Design), *Premier Manager 2* (Gremlin Graphics) and *Oscar* (Flair Software) for being the highest-rated games that month.

Elsewhere, *Sega Force Mega* was giving the thumbs-up to the best Mega Drive offerings, which included *Madden '94* (Electronic Arts), *Sensible Soccer* (Sony), *Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition* (Capcom), *Aladdin* (Sega), *Dune CD* (Virgin, Mega-CD), *James Pond 3: Operation Starfish* (Electronic Arts) and *Sonic The Hedgehog CD* (Sega, Mega-CD).

THIS MONTH IN…

SUPERPLAY



Third-party SNES development was a contentious subject, with developers abandoning it as Nintendo allegedly overcharged for blank cartridges – some believed as much as 500 per cent markup. Third-parties reportedly had to sell their games at £49.99 to just break even!



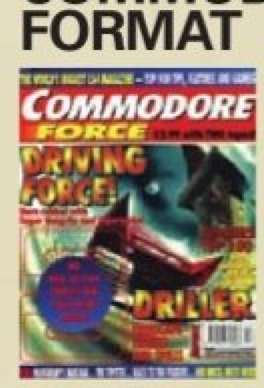
AMIGA FORCE



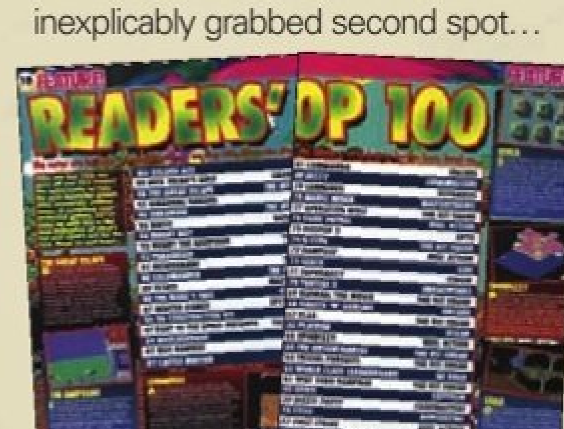
AF previewed *Rise Of The Robots* and was fawning all over it. "The speed and movement of the characters is unparalleled in any beat-'em-up currently available on the market [and] it looks set to herald a new standard in beat-'em-ups." It set a new standard, all right…



COMMODORE FORMAT

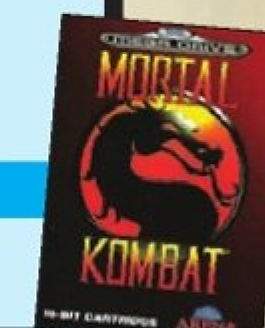


With *CF* coming to the end of its life, as indeed was publisher Impact, it filled several pages with the 100 best games, as voted by its readership. The top was *Creatures* by Thalamus, with its sequel at number three. *The Blues Brothers* by Titus inexplicably grabbed second spot…



CHARTS

DEC 1993



MEGA DRIVE

1. Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)
2. Jungle Strike (Electronic Arts)
3. Micro Machines (Codemasters)
4. Jurassic Park (Sega)
5. PGA Tour Golf 2 (Electronic Arts)



SNES

1. Mortal Kombat (Acclaim)
2. Striker (Elite)
3. Super Mario Kart (Nintendo)
4. Starwing (Nintendo)
5. Super Star Wars (JVC)

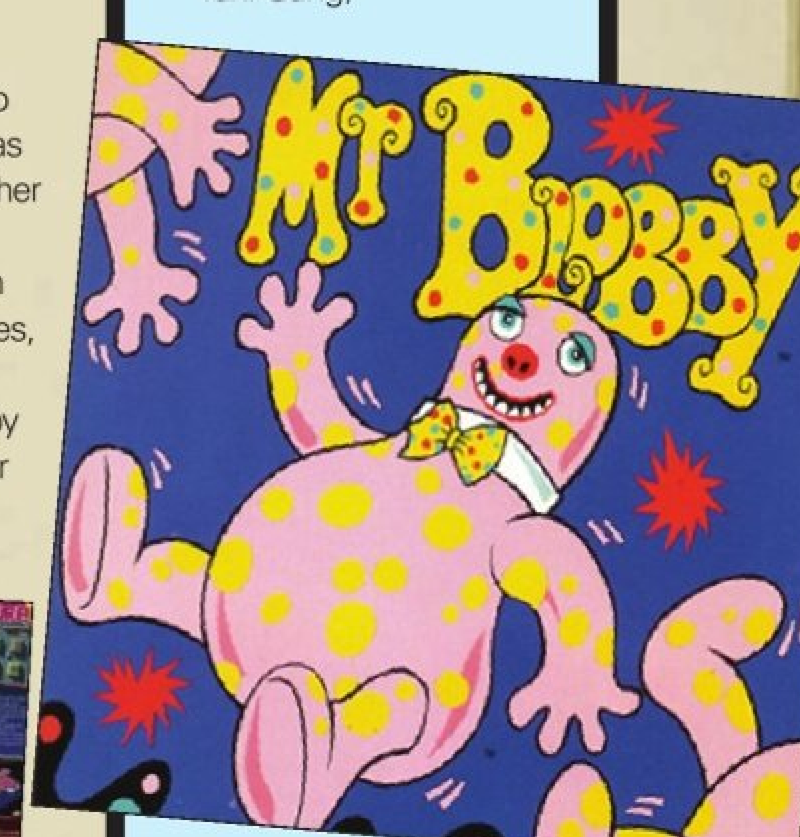


SEGA MEGA-CD

1. Batman Returns (Sega)
2. Night Trap (Sega)
3. Final Fight (Sega)
4. Road Avenger (Sega)
5. Jaguar XJ220 (Sega)

MUSIC

1. Mr Blobby (Mr Blobby)
2. Babe (Take That)
3. I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That) (Meat Loaf)
4. For Whom The Bell Tolls (Bee Gees)
5. Twist And Shout (Chaka Demus & Pliers featuring Jack Radics & Taxi Gang)



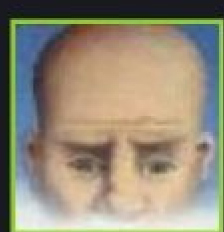
retroGAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



Tom Thumb

WHO NEEDS A C64 WHEN C16 GAMES ARE THIS GOOD?

#37



» COMMODORE 16
» KINGSOFT
» 1986

If there's ever a game that could make the humble C16 feel like a TARDIS, then this is it.

As soon as the game loads, you are greeted with little Tom rising up to his starting position to a short ditty, which atmospherically repeats itself at various intervals throughout the game, something which I found quite refreshing.

The graphics are large and colourful and the screen scrolls along in all directions as beautifully and quickly as possible. The controls are responsive enough, and there are two distinct speed settings for Tom to walk and run around at, something which becomes crucial for avoiding the many hazards in Tom's world.

The objective throughout is to locate all the treasure chests inside the great pyramid by finding the keys strategically placed behind many hazards. These keys open the locked doors, which enable you to continue on your quest. Along the way you will encounter treasure boxes, which are worth 500 gold to Tom, but only standard points for us. Aww!

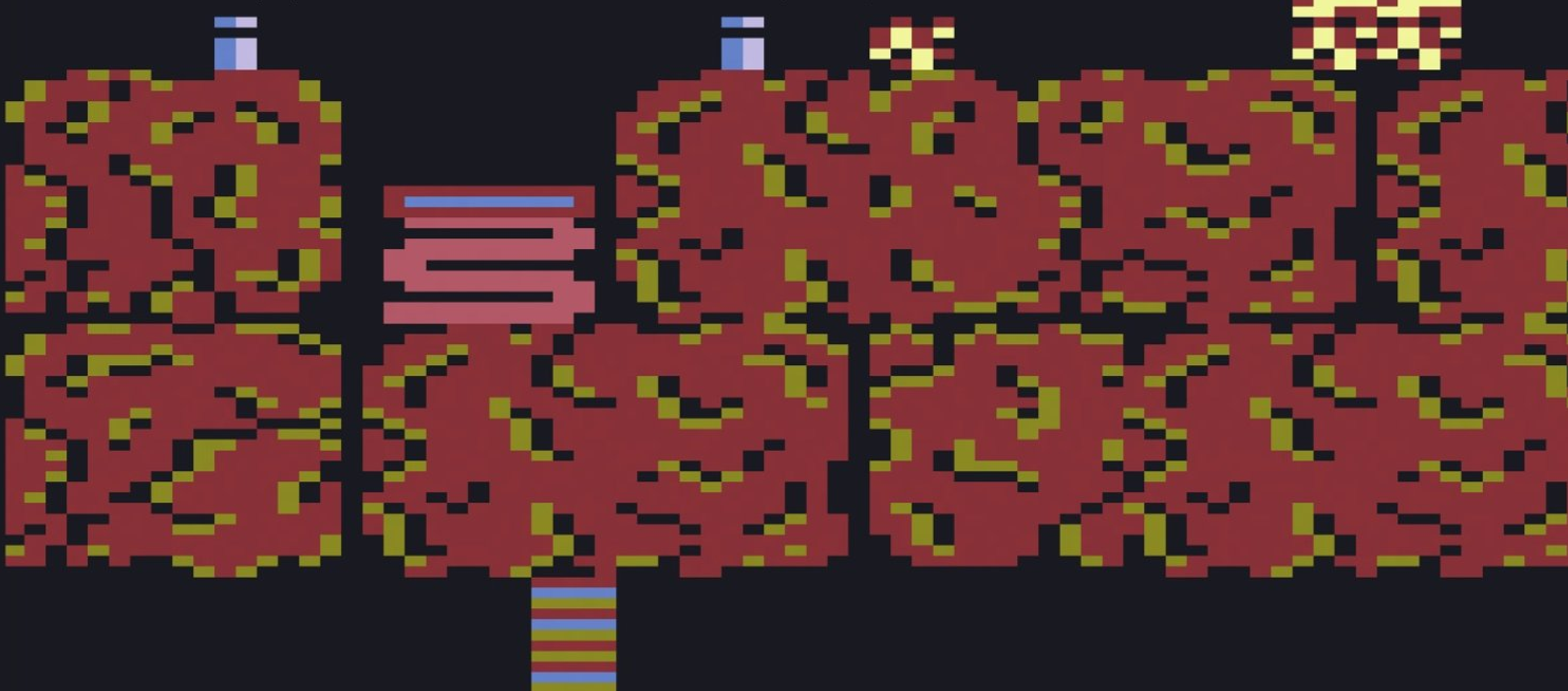
Danger is afoot however, as the large caverns hold plenty of creatures and obstacles that are determined to stop brave Tom from completing his precious quest. Fortunately there are a number of springs to bounce on and plenty of ladders to climb, which certainly makes things slightly easier for the intrepid explorer.

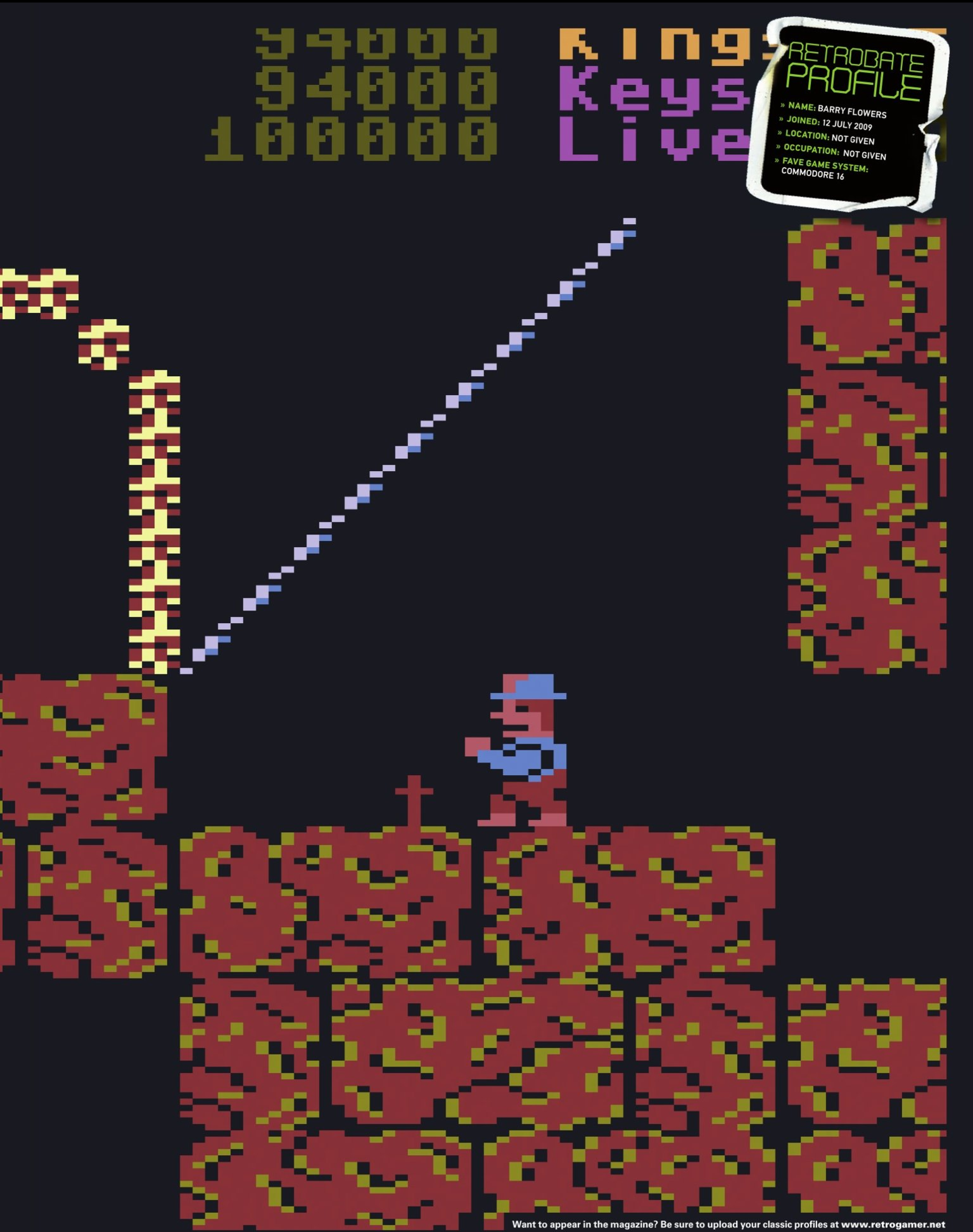
So, to recap, you must find all the keys and unlock every door while avoiding all the nasties and hazards that stand in your way. Oh, and make sure you grab all those treasure chests along the way too – otherwise, what was the point in sending poor Tom out on a great perilous quest in the first place?

Tom Thumb is one of those rare occurrences on the C16 which makes you realise just how under-utilised the machine actually was, and what it was nevertheless capable of in skilled hands. The 178-screen playing area is so huge that I would've expected this more achievable only on the Plus4, but it's all within just 12k.

Another nice touch is that you can also continue from the last door after a Game Over, which is handy for a game this size. Even the most ardent gamers will still find *Tom Thumb* to be a tough challenge through one sitting, but the difficulty level I feel is just right.

Anyway, this is still regarded as one of the greatest titles released on the C16, and one of the few titles that absolutely murders its Commodore 64 counterpart on every level. *





RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** BARRY FLOWERS
» **JOINED:** 12 JULY 2009
» **LOCATION:** NOT GIVEN
» **OCCUPATION:** NOT GIVEN
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** COMMODORE 16

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COMMO







In a continuing series, Retro Gamer explains why Commodore's beige breadbin is a more serious format to collect for than you might think.



» **Manufacturer:** Commodore » **Model:** Commodore 64 » **Launched:** 1982 » **Country of Origin:** USA

DORE 64

64 The Collector's Guide



» Commodore obviously liked the aesthetics of the Amiga as it eventually placed the C64 in a similar casing.





» There were plenty of magazines available for C64 owners to choose from, including *Zzap!64*, *Commodore Format* and *Commodore User*.



» There were a large number of different Commodore 64 packs available, with many featuring popular games of the time.

WHY IT'S COLLECTABLE

The first thing to realise when considering collecting for the Commodore 64 is that it isn't like *Pokémon*; you most certainly cannot catch them all. With an estimated 10,000 or more commercial titles, it adds up to a hell of a lot of games to track down. When taking that into consideration, along with accurate emulation via Vice and CCS, and the availability of devices such as the SD2IEC and 1541 Ultimate to play game images on real hardware, just why should people collect originals?

It is, admittedly, a very good question, and one with very good answers. First, there's the tangibility aspect to owning a set of cherished games; to be able to hold them in your hands, look at them and treasure them. Today, for so many people, a collection may amount to no more than an uncountable number of MP3s or video files stored upon a hard drive, whereas with a vinyl album or CD, a video tape or DVD, you tend to value and appreciate it more because it's a physical object. This is no different when it comes to computer games or videogames. In contrast to today's fairly uniform publishing world, there were quite a number of titles during the 1980s that had standout packaging or utilised a particular eye-catching style, such as the Infocom adventures, Electronic Arts' gatefold album homages or Broderbund's curiously hexagon-shaped box for *Centauri Alliance*.

The other main argument to this point is that there were a lot of complex games released for the C64, straddling genres as diverse as RPG, strategy, adventure and tech-heavy simulations. Each game's packaging – especially their manuals – were a vital component of the experience, and without them you would often be left swimming in the dark, not knowing what to do. Sure, they may be scanned and made available for reference, but it isn't quite the same as flicking through a thick paper-based book or glancing over large-sized printed maps, and they would more often than not be used for the copy protection look-ups. Games such as *Wasteland* even went as far as including false entries in the associated booklets to confuse possible cheaters!

Not everyone has the same reasons for collecting, and quite often they overlap. Many collectors tend to focus on particular genres, certain companies, or merely games they recall playing when they were younger. Needless to say, this proves to be a fairly popular approach, especially given the aforementioned perceived impossibility of obtaining everything ever released. The timeline of the C64 means that many of the kids who were battling alien invaders or conquering foreign lands now have children of their own, and for some it's a way to introduce what they loved to a new generation.

Some people just like to collect in general. Others will often focus on rare and hard to find titles in order to digitally preserve for distribution online. Myself? Well, I can honestly say all three of those apply and more, although I'm lacking in the children department currently. Sometimes there's nothing like the thrill of





» Electronic Arts' gatefold covers not only set them apart from other publishers, but also made them very collectible.

DID YOU KNOW?

■ The C64 went through five revisions and two different case designs, with the most publicised difference being the output of the SID (sound) chip. Revision A machines are unreliable, but worth more; the C128 was Commodore's attempt to push its tech further, but is compatible in 64 mode with 99.9 per cent of software; the Commodore GS and Japanese MAX can really only play cartridges. Finally, the SX64 was the 'portable' playing option with a built-in disk drive and monitor.

» One of the great things about collecting for the Commodore 64 is the sheer variety of box designs that are available.





the chase, or suddenly discovering a game you never knew about before and enjoying it. Games are still written for the C64 even today, the format thriving well after Commodore's bankruptcy, and although many are made available for free, some are published (by the likes of Cronosoft and Psytronik) for money, and in many cases, the entry fee is well worth paying, such as with *Newcomer* or *Knight 'n' Grail*.

Regardless of all the arguments, there will always be some people resolutely stuck to collecting only through digital means; if anything, it's a great way to try before buying if you're serious about collecting games you also want to enjoy playing. So, if you are still here, and still keen on acquiring C64 games, then where should you begin? The answer to that really lies in which genres you enjoy, because there is nothing that the C64 doesn't hold in spades, and a lot of the time collecting for the format will not set you back much money in the process.

The most noticeable dichotomy, however, was that most of the resource hogs such as simulations, RPGs and strategy titles came from the US, where owning a disk drive was a way of life, and most of the great arcade-orientated titles and quirky concepts came from Europe. Hence compared to Spectrum and Amstrad owners, C64 users literally gained the best of both worlds. Adventures, as it turned out, were split down the middle. On one hand there was the genius nature of much of Infocom's output, balanced against the tight, compelling works of Level 9 (*Gnome Ranger* and *Scapeghost*) and Magnetic Scrolls (*The Pawn* and *Guild Of Thieves*). Whichever way you saw it, there wasn't much on any of the other 8-bit computers to match them, and the versions released were just as good as the corresponding 16-bit incarnations.

If adventures were not your thing, then there was bound to be something else. Fighting games? *IK+*, *Way Of The Exploding Fist* and *Barbarian*. Racers? *Pitstop 2*, *Turbo Charge* and *Revs*. Puzzlers? *Zenji*, *Sokoban* and *Pipemania*. Platformers? *Impossible Mission*, *Mayhem In Monsterland* and *Monty On The Run*. Shooters? *Armalyte*, *Turrican*, and *Wizball*. RPGs? The *Bard's Tale* trilogy, *Ultima 4* and *Mars Saga*. Action adventure? *The Last Ninja*, *Project Firestart* and *Mercenary*. Strategy? *Laser Squad*, *Storm Across Europe* and *Germany 1985*. Simulation? *Gunship*, *Project Stealth Fighter* and *Silent Service*. Sports? *Microprose Soccer*, *TV Sports Football* and *Leaderboard*. Doesn't fit a genre? *The Sentinel*, *Citadel* and *Little Computer People*.

The relatively small amount of space here doesn't allow for a full dissection of the vast number of quality titles available, and there are many, many more for each genre listed above, collated in the list at the end of the article. The lack of regional lockout means buying games from abroad is relatively simple, and thankfully the majority of the best foreign titles were released in the UK, or the import versions work fine on PAL machines; **Retro Gamer** even has some handy advice over the page to help with this.

So what are you waiting for? Fire up the Commodore 64, turn on the disk drive and dive into a world of endless possibilities…

THE PERIPHERALS



» According to Commodore, the disk drive was more expensive to manufacture than the C64 itself.

» Note the contrast between equivalent US and European releases of the same game.

THE DISK DRIVE

If there is one piece of hardware that you absolutely, positively need to play and collect C64 originals in this day and age, it's the Commodore's external disk drive. Most of the popular, collectable and in-demand titles were released on disk (thus avoiding the long loading times of tape), and there are plenty more that were unique to the format. Given that one will set you back around as little as £20 today – as opposed to the £150+ you would have to pay during the 1980s – then there's really no excuse either.

The original 1541 model can be discounted because of its bulky nature, weight and temperamental drive latch mechanism. The 1571 model is excellent, but you cannot take advantage of the extra features unless you have a C128 or are running disks created using a 1571. This leaves two main options on the table. Commodore's own 1541-II is solid, reliable, easy to open and clean, and does what it says on the tin. In the other corner resides the Excelerator+ produced by Evesham Micros, a clone drive that was every bit as good as the official thing, and perhaps even better in some respects.

Due to Commodore's insistence on sticking with a serial communication system, the speed of an ordinary disk drive is not that fast. Thankfully a few enterprising companies released kernal replacements such as Dolphin DOS, or cartridge-based fast loaders such as the Epyx Fastload, Cinemaware Warpspeed, and those present on Datel's Action Replay. Most original games published after 1984 came with a fast loader as standard, but for using with your own disks – or indeed any game without one – these options certainly take the strain out of waiting.

Speaking of fast loaders, a cautionary word should be given if you are looking to import disk-based Commodore 64 games. Thankfully, all bar one of the major C64 markets you are likely to buy from use PAL, with the exception obviously being the US. While there are no regional lockouts, there may be some issues when loading American games on a UK C64, but this isn't specifically because of the difference in television standards. In actual fact, the speed and timing of the disk drive is directly controlled by the C64 itself, and an NTSC machine runs at just over 1MHz whereas a PAL one runs at just under 1MHz, hence any copy protection or fast loader requiring extremely precise timing during the boot process will fail if run on the 'opposite' machine.

Caveat emptor, and all that; it certainly pays to do your research, especially if you also want to play the games in question once you've had them shipped over from the US. Strategy, RPG and simulation games from the likes of Origin and SSI are almost certainly compatible in the UK, along with releases by Synapse and Broderbund. Activision games are more than likely to work, but games from Electronic Arts, Epyx and Interplay tend to be around 50/50 on their chances. Furthermore, anything from Accolade is pretty much right out. If in doubt, ask for advice online at places such as Lemon64.

...AND THE REST



01. Action Replay cartridge

■ An Action Replay cartridge was an essential component of any C64 setup. With a wide range of features such as freezing and dumping memory to disk, hunting for cheat codes, copying files or merely acting as a disk fast loader, there was something for everyone. The last entry in the series, number six, is the best one to go for.

02. Expert cartridge

■ In contrast, the Expert cartridge was more for the serious enthusiast instead. It could act as a freezer and disk copier like the Action Replay, but also had an in-built machine code monitor and file converter. While publically attacked as a copy device, many programmers such as John Twiddy openly admitted to using the cartridge to assist them when working.

03. Protovision four-player adapter

■ The Protovision four-player adapter is one example of a user port-based extension to enable another two joysticks to be connected to the C64. Although mostly supported by newer software such as *Bombmania*, it can also be used with adapted older games, such as the beautiful *IK+ Gold* release that allows for three human players.

04. Magic Voice

■ The Magic Voice was a bold but failed attempt to add hardware-supported speech to games. It's only utilised by Commodore's conversions of *Wizard Of Wor* and *Gorf*, and is required to run *A Bee Cs*. Three games may not sound much, but it certainly adds something while playing the arcade titles.

05. Cartridge expansion board

■ Sometimes a C64 owner would have just too many useful cartridges, and an expansion board would be the ideal way to save wear and tear on the cartridge slot of the computer. Each slot has a switch beside it allowing them to be toggled on and off for booting on power-up.

06. TIB 3.5" drive

■ The TIB 3.5" drive was a failed attempt to give the smaller floppy media more market penetration. Despite the incredibly fast loading speeds due to the drive being connected through the cartridge port, users and publishers were reluctant to break from the 5.25" floppy format, and it was essentially dead at launch.

07. Datel Sound Sampler

■ The Datel Sound Sampler was a cheap, fun way to play with sound. Everything needed was included in the package, and once a sound was captured then echo, reverb or any manner of manipulation could be performed on it. Just a pity you couldn't save them out for later use.

64 The Collector's Guide

TOP 5 GAMES TO PLAY

01. The Sentinel

■ All powerful. All seeing. All absorbing. *The Sentinel* is arguably Geoff Crammond's finest moment, full of atmosphere, challenge and strategy across 10,000 levels.



02. Mayhem In Monsterland

■ The last great game of the original era, *Mayhem In Monsterland* showed the consoles that a humble 8-bit computer could produce a platformer just as good as they could.



03. Impossible Mission

■ 'Another visitor. Stay a while. Stay forever!' A fitting description of *Impossible Mission*, a perfect balance between risk and reward. If you fail, you only have yourself to blame…



04. Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders

■ *Zak McKracken* was the second, and arguably better game produced using the SCUMM engine for the C64, and saw all manner of strangeness in your quest to prevent aliens from reducing Earth's intelligence.



05. Last Ninja 2

■ *Last Ninja 2* was the greatest of the trilogy, with the best music and graphics. You even got to pretend to be a real ninja if the mask and rubber shuriken weren't confiscated!



PLAY THESE NEXT



IK+

■ Archer Maclean's sequel was a massive breath of fresh air to the fighting genre, and all he really did was add a third fighter. Actually, there was a lot more to it than that, with dazzling animation and intricately designed backgrounds that were full of life. A superb fighter that every C64 owner needs to play.



Bubble Bobble

■ The Commodore 64 had plenty of cracking arcade conversions, but this version of Taito's classic from Ste Ruddy was easily one of the best. Great chunky visuals, a stomping rendition of the original theme tune and all the main levels made for a frightfully authentic experience that left Spectrum and CPC owners fuming.



Paradroid

■ Andrew Braybrook was a master at making the C64 sing, and *Paradroid* is arguably one of his greatest efforts. Endlessly playable and ridiculously slick, it's a clever blend of genres that sees you taking control of the titular Paradroid and taking on a ship filled with dangerous robots. A true classic.



Project Firestart

■ Released by Electronic Arts in 1989, this epic adventure title may have borrowed elements from popular sci-fi films such as *Alien*, but it was so polished it really didn't matter. Huge in scope and years ahead of its time, it remains one of the C64's best action adventure games and really shouldn't be missed.



Armalyte

■ If you wanted to play decent shoot-'em-ups on an 8-bit computer you really needed a C64. Beautifully paced and featuring some truly stunning boss design and music, *Armalyte* is easily one of the best shooters on Commodore's hardware, and a must-play, even if you're not a hardened fan of the genre.

TOP 5 IMPORT GAMES



01. Ultima 1

While a little simplistic, the full package including maps and bag of coins is well worth hunting down. Prices have risen in the last couple of years though.



Avenger (MAX version)

■ The version released for the MAX computer in Japan. So much better than the obese invader attack that was released in the West, and quite a good conversion.

03. Castlevania

■ Konami NES games? On the C64?! You betcha. While not as good, it was certainly a cheaper way to play the game, and is guaranteed to make people double-take your shelves.



04. The Simpsons Arcade

■ This one surprises many people. Why Konami chose not to release it in Europe is a mystery. At the time it was a decent conversion, and still holds up fairly well today.



05. Oil Barons

■ If you're going to make a computer-assisted board game, then this is how to do it. Just look at it! The C64 kept track of all the facts and figures, leaving players to concentrate on strategy.



IMPORT THESE NEXT



Gyruss

■ For some reason now lost to history, this stunning port of Konami's excellent shooter was never released in the UK, something which is rather a pity. We'd urge you to track it down if you can though, for while the sprites look a little rough, the tight controls and super slickness more than make up for it. A truly impressive port.



Lost Tomb

■ Based on the old Stern coin-op, this is another highly impressive conversion that many European gamers will have never experienced. Similar in style to *Tutankham*, it involves you nipping around the tightly designed levels and grabbing as much loot as possible. Yet another excellent port that few gamers got to actually play.



Diamond Mine

■ An undiscovered gem, if you'll excuse the pun. Guide the mine trolley through the maze of dirt in many mines, collecting the diamonds and then returning to the home station. Like *Flicky*, you are rewarded with more bonus points for an ever-increasing line behind you, but watch out for the monsters who can steal all your gems!



Whistler's Brother

■ This is a clever little game from Broderbund, and quite possibly one of the earliest examples of using whistling as a fully-fledged game mechanic. A simple platformer of sorts, *Whistler's Brother* requires you to use whistles to direct your bookish brother around the game's 16 levels. An ingenious idea, well executed.



Space Taxi

■ Ignore the rather basic visuals and lose yourself in a ridiculously addictive action game as you fly your taxi around the 24 deviously designed stages. Limited fuel, thrusters and working landing gear all have to be mastered in order to become the best of the best, but it's so hard to put down you may well manage it.

64 The Collector's Guide

TOP 5 RAREST PAL GAMES





01. The Great Giana Sisters

■ Infamous even today, it isn't as hard to find as you may think. Nonetheless, obtaining a copy of this *SMB* clone, especially on disk, may still run you a pretty penny.





02. Bounty Bob Strikes Back (disk version)

■ The tape version is easy to find but both US and UK disk versions are like hen's teeth. The US version is also in demand from 5200 owners, as the box is identical.

03. Gauntlet 3

■ Reviewed and never released, yet some copies slipped out somewhere – probably US Gold's own software club. It's good too, making it more frustrating that it's so hard to find.



Double Dragon (cartridge)

■ Not the rubbish Melbourne House conversion but an almost-as-bad second attempt by Ocean, released on cartridge. Never sold in shops, and not many people know about it.



05. Wizard of Wor (original art)

■ It's not the game; it's the box. There are but a handful of examples known of this English language release in existence, and why it was changed to the more familiar purple-robed wizard version is unknown.



GET THESE NEXT



Katakis

■ Rainbow Arts was well known for squeezing every last drop of useable memory out of the C64, and *Katakis* was no exception. Heavily influenced by Irem's *R-Type*, it fell foul of Activision and was re-released after several modifications as *Denaris*. Needless to say, the original version is now pretty hard to find.



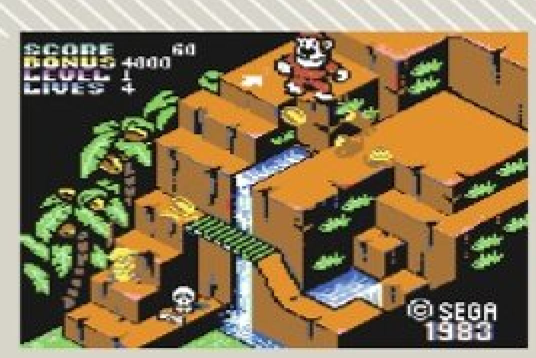
Moonfall

■ A late C64 title, released by the company that Hewson transformed into, it combines aspects of *Mercenary* and *Elite*, along with wire-frame graphics, to produce an interesting, challenging exploration and shooting experience. For whatever reason, it barely hit the shops and hence is one of those great but hard to find games.



Block Hopper

■ Just by the name you can guess which arcade classic this is a blatant clone of, and whoever was charged with designing the inlay cover left nothing to the imagination either. The annoying thing is that it plays a pretty good game of *Q*Bert*, but is so hideously rare that we're liable to have another Pope before you see a copy.



Congo Bongo (disk)

■ Ignore the tape-based version of Sega's isometric *Donkey Kong* clone and instead treat yourself to the disk version, which is a far superior offering, only let down by long loading times. Having said that, it's incredibly hard to track down, so expect to pay a pretty penny if and when you do finally manage to find it.



Satan's Hollow

■ Most of Commodore's arcade conversions were released on cartridge, but this one, oddly enough, only came out on disk. It's actually a pretty decent attempt to convert at the Bally/Midway original, which itself isn't that well known either. Evidently though, it couldn't have sold highly, and hence is fairly hard to find today.

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

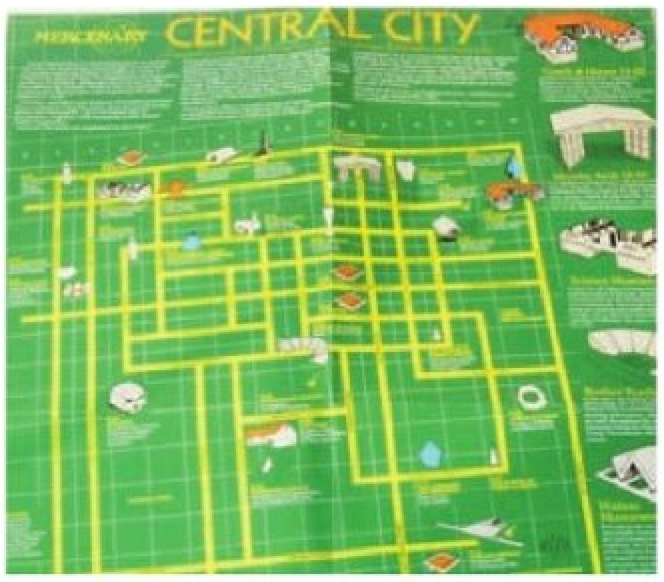
Big, brash boxsets were much more a Nineties console creation, but there are some snazzy-packaged C64 games out there. One such example is the Mercenary Compendium Edition…





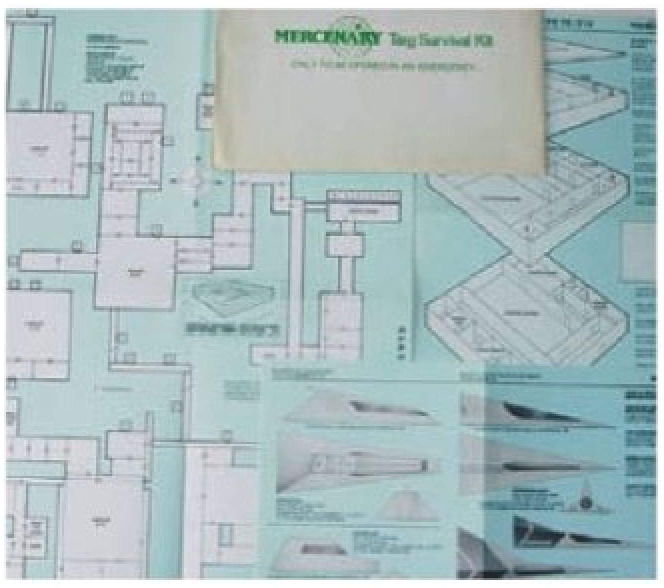
The Games

■ Inside, this special edition pack contains the original Commodore 64 version of *Mercenary* as well as the *Second City* expansion, along with a short novella that, if you read it closely, offers some hints about how to succeed in the game.



The Map

■ A large-scale map plots out the main attractions of Targ's main city, providing interesting details and facts not mentioned in the game, as well as one or two in-jokes. It's essential for planning a way to escape the planet with your pockets full of loot.



The Survival Kit

■ The Survival Kit is basically a set of blueprints, and has several useful layouts of the game's underground networks, including the location of the lift accesses. Aside from the one where the Winchester drive resides, of course…

Special thanks to Mark Ambrose for kindly allowing us to use his Commodore 64s and Jason Kelk for his TIB drive

The Collector's Guide

THE C64 GAMES YOU NEED TO OWN

- Action Biker
- Alien 3
- Alien Syndrome
- Aliens (UK Version)
- Alter Ego
- American 3D Pool
- Ancipital
- Apollo 18
- Archon
- Arkanoid
- Armalyte
- Arnie
- Atomino
- Avenger
- Ballblazer
- Barbarian
- Bard's Tale, The
- Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing
- Batalyx
- Batman: The Caped Crusader
- Battle Chess
- Battle Command
- Battle Valley
- Beach Head
- Beach Head 2
- Below The Root
- Beyond The Forbidden Forest
- Bionic Command (UK Version)
- Blue Max
- BMX Kidz
- BMX Simulator
- Bobby Bearing
- Borrowed Time
- Boulder Dash
- Bounder
- Bounty Bob Strikes Back
- Bruce Lee
- Bubble Bobble
- Buck Rogers: Countdown To Doomsday
- Bug Bomber
- Buggy Boy
- Cabal (UK Version)
- California Games
- Centauri Alliance
- Champions Of Krynn
- Chip's Challenge
- Choplifter
- Citadel



Entombed


IK+

- CJ's Elephant Antics
- Combat School
- Crazy Comets
- Creatures
- Creatures 2
- Cyberball
- Cybernoid
- Dan Dare
- Dark Side
- Death Knights of Krynn
- Defender Of The Crown
- Diamond Mine
- Doomdark's Revenge
- Dragon Wars
- Dragonsden
- Driller
- Dropzone
- Druid
- Eidolon, The
- Elvira 2
- Emlyn Hughes' International Soccer
- E-Motion
- Encounter
- Enforcer
- Entombed
- Exile
- Fiendish Freddy's Big Top O' Fun
- First Samurai
- Fourth Protocol, The
- Frankie Goes To Hollywood
- Gauntlet II
- Gauntlet III
- Ghostbusters
- Ghouls 'N' Ghosts
- Grand Prix Circuit
- Great Giana Sisters, The
- Green Beret
- Gremlins
- Gribbly's Day Out
- Guardian
- Guild Of Thieves
- Gunship
- Gyruss
- Hacker
- Hardball
- Hawkeye
- Head Over Heels
- H.E.R.O.

- Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy, The
- Hunter's Moon
- Hyper Sports
- I, Ball
- IK+
- Ikari Warriors
- Impossible Mission
- Impossible Mission 2
- International 3D Tennis
- International Soccer
- Into The Eagle's Nest
- Iridis Alpha
- Iron Lord
- Ivan 'Ironman' Stewart's Super Offroad
- Jumpman
- Juno First
- Kamikaze
- Katakis
- Kikstart 2



The Last Ninja 2

- Knight 'N' Grail
- Koronis Rift
- Laser Squad
- The Last Ninja
- Last Ninja 2, The
- Leaderboard
- Legacy Of The Ancients
- Lemmings
- Little Computer People
- Lode Runner
- Lords Of Chaos
- Lords Of Midnight, The
- Lotus Esprit Turbo Challenge
- Magic Candle, The
- Mancopter
- Maniac Mansion
- Mars Saga
- Master Of Magic
- Mayhem In Monsterland
- Mega Apocalypse
- Mercenary
- Microprose Soccer
- Mission Elevator
- Montezuma's Revenge
- Monty On The Run
- Moon Patrol
- M.U.L.E.
- Myth: History In The Making
- Nam/Vietnam

EXTREMELY RARE Games that have less than a few dozen known copies available.

VERY RARE Very hard to come by. Expect to see only a couple of copies per year.

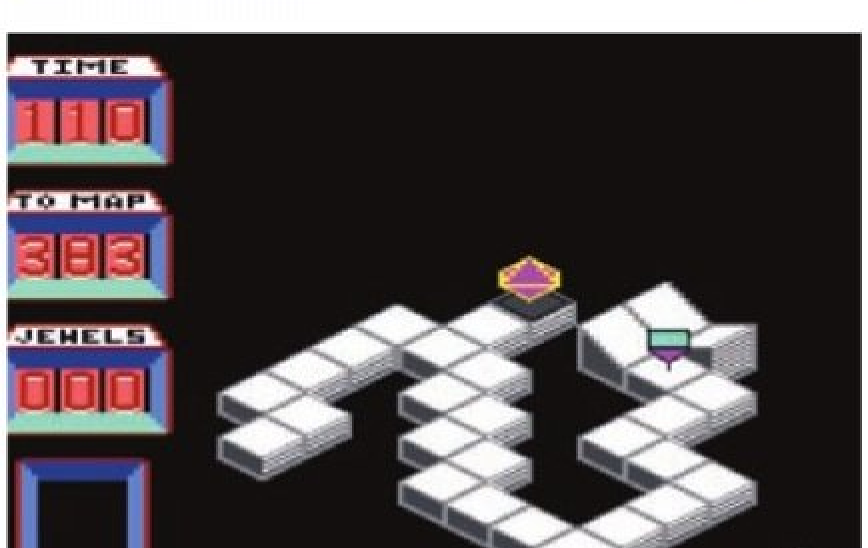
RARE You should be able to source these in a reasonable amount of time.

UNCOMMON You won't find them straight away, but you will after a search.

COMMON Always just a click away for the average collector.

VERY COMMON So common you'll find them in most bundles of games you buy.

- Navy SEALS
- Nebulus
- Neuromancer
- Newcomer
- Night Shift
- Ninja Spirit
- OutRun Europa
- Pac-Land
- Pac-Mania
- Pang
- Paradroid
- Parallax
- Park Patrol
- Pastfinder
- Pawn, The
- Pistop 2
- Platoon
- POD
- Powerplay
- Project Firestart
- Project Stealth Fighter
- PSI-5 Trading Company
- Raid On Bungeling Bay
- Raid Over Moscow
- Rainbow Islands
- Revenge Of The Mutant Camels
- Revs
- Rick Dangerous
- Robocop 3
- Rocket Ranger
- Rodland
- Rollaround
- Samurai Warrior
- Scapeghost
- Scarabaeus
- Sentinel
- Sentinel, The
- Seven Cities Of Gold
- Shadowfire
- Sheep In Space
- Skate Or Die
- Slayer
- Sleepwalker
- Slicks
- Smash TV
- Space Crusade



Spindizzy

- Space Rogue
- Space Taxi
- Speedball
- Speedball 2
- Spelunker
- Spindizzy
- Spore
- Spy Hunter
- Spy Vs Spy
- Star Paws
- Starcross
- Steg The Slug
- Storm Across Europe
- Stormlord
- Strike Fleet
- Stunt Car Racer
- Summer Games 2
- Super Pipeline 2
- Super Sunday
- Supremacy
- SWIV
- Tank Attack
- Tass Times In Tonetown
- Tau Ceti
- Temple Of Apshai Trilogy
- Tenth Frame
- Tetris
- They Stole A Million
- Thing On A Spring
- Thrust
- Time Machine
- Times Of Lore
- Toy Bizarre
- Tracksuit Manager
- Trailblazer
- TRAZ
- Turbo Charge
- Turrican
- Turrican 2
- TV Sports Football
- Ultima 4
- Untouchables, The
- Uridium
- Warhawk
- Wasteland
- Way Of The Exploding Fist, The
- Whistler's Brother
- Who Dares Wins 2
- Wings Of Fury
- Wizard
- Wizard of Wor
- Wizball
- World Games
- Zak McKracken And The Alien Mindbenders
- Zenji
- Zig Zag
- Ziods
- Zolyx
- Zone Ranger
- Zork

Collector Q&A

In addition to his insane knowledge of the system, Mat Allen also has a rather impressive collection…



■ What drew you to start collecting for the C64?
Actually, you could say I started right from the moment I got a C64 because I've barely let go of anything in more than 25 years. There's probably an inherited packrat gene from my father somewhere in the mix!

■ How long have you been collecting so far?
During the Nineties, I went on a bit of a pursuit via various mail order firms to fill a lot of gaps in my collection, so that's probably when it really began. The cartridge interest started in 2000 when I worked on the C64 section for the Digital Press website.

■ Why did you buy the games you have so far?
Originally it was to acquire games I hadn't bought or played during the Eighties, especially on disk as I was a late owner in that respect. Later on it was games I only just discovered, and games that needed digitally preserving for projects such as Gamebase64.

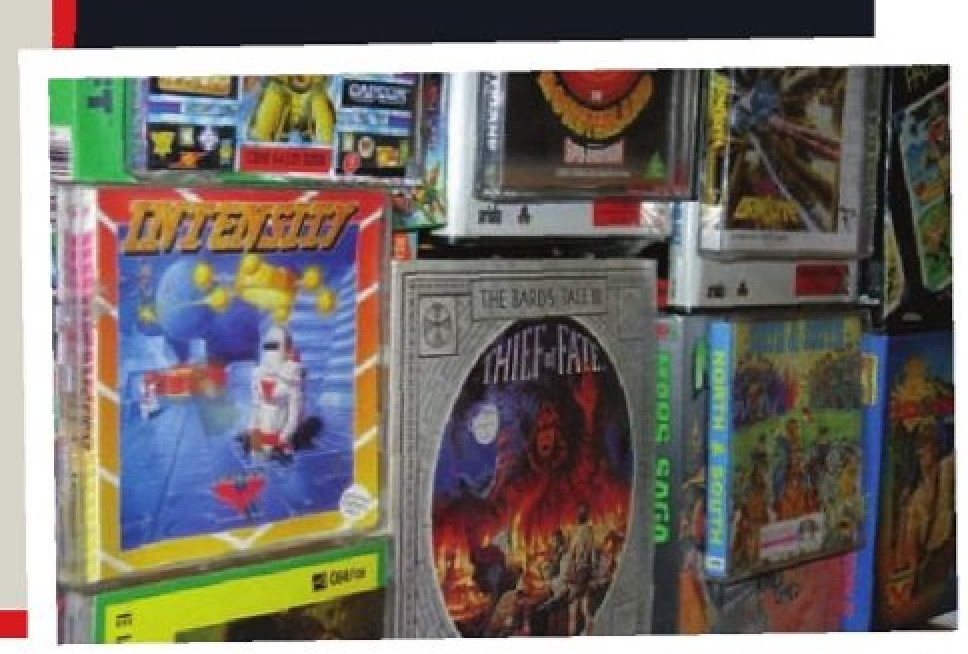
■ What advice do you give to potential collectors?
Don't go wild, unless you're trying to fill a lot of gaps at the same time. With so many games out there, pick and choose the ones you wish to obtain, be it titles from a certain company, genre or style. My original criteria was most games given over 80% in *Zzap!64* that I didn't own!

■ What is the cornerstone of your collection?
That's like asking to pick a favourite child. Obtaining the *Crystal Castles* prototype cartridge was a coup. *Double Dragon* on cartridge and *Gauntlet III* are up there as well.

■ What would you say is the hardest game to find that you've bought?
I've got quite a few one-offs here, mostly on cartridge. Getting some of the Japanese MAX and Polish titles was a lesson in good fortune, and being in the right place at the right time. And I must say thanks to Andy 'Thalamus' Roberts for selling me the copy of *Gauntlet III*.

■ What is the most you've spent on any one title?
Surprisingly not that much, compared to other systems I collect for. The most was probably £150 for one of the Dinamic cartridge titles. There have been a few others approaching that figure, but that is the highest.

■ What are you still missing?
I'm still looking for an original of *Chuck Rock*. If it even exists, as no one I know even owns it. Aside from that, a Japanese C64 as well.



CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAPASCHIPS



If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver…

JILL OF THE JUNGLE

INFO

- **SYSTEM:** PC DOS
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **PUBLISHER:** EPIC MEGAGAMES
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE



» [PC DOS] Certain animals will only chase Jill if she gets too close to them, with these bees being a perfect example.

Nowadays, Epic is best known for *Unreal* and *Gears Of War*, but in its early years it was quite a different story. Bristling with diversity and willing to tackle practically any type of genre, Epic MegaGames (as it was then known) made everything from hardcore shooters to beat-'em-ups.

One of its most popular past franchises is *Jazz Jackrabbit*, a frantic platformer starring an armed-to-the-teeth rabbit, which went on to spawn a sequel and Christmas spin-off. However, Epic actually cut its platforming teeth on a surprisingly fun platformer by the name of *Jill Of The Jungle*.



» [PC DOS] Enemies will constantly whittle away at Jill's precious health. Fortunately, eating fruit will replenish it.





No doubt created as an answer to the popular shareware models for games such as id's *Commander Keen* and Apogee's *Duke Nukem*, *Jill Of The Jungle* was a surprisingly slick and highly inventive little platformer. Spread across 16 relatively large levels (a special bonus stage was also included), *Jill Of The Jungle* saw the titular heroine leaping over spikes, chasms and lava pits on her quest to save her precious prince, an act which doesn't conclude until the third and final part.

The plot is basic, but the game is anything but. Visually it's appealing, with cute critters and an impressively slick scroll rate, while everything moves along at a fair old lick, recalling popular console platformers like *Mario* and *Sonic*. Like the best console games it's also full of variety, with Jill progressing through lava-strewn caverns and dense jungles as she continues on her precious quest.

Initially, you'll be required to do little more than simply move from one side of the gaudy game world to the other, but as the game progresses more and more puzzle elements are introduced. Chains and climbing vines are often occupied by patrolling creatures, keys are needed to access certain doors and areas, while lifts can become puzzles in themselves as you activate them to get past certain animals. A variety of weapons can be picked up along the way, ranging from simply throwing knives – with boomerang like qualities – and deadly spinning blades, and Jill is even able to turn into a number of different animals as she completes her lengthy quest.

If the gameplay features all the trappings of a traditional console platformer, we're pleased to say that the controls are also up to the same high standards. Whether you're playing with keys or joystick, Jill is amazingly responsive, and it's possible to pull off some impressive platforming feats that become more and more crucial as the game continues. It may look like a console platformer, but it also plays like one too.

Utilising a simple hub mechanic (effectively a normal level but with no monsters or hazards) *Jill Of The Jungle* is full of referential humour and digs towards other platformers. It's admittedly rather tough to begin with, and learning how to fire certain weapons takes some getting used to, but there are plenty of apples located on each stage to fill up your health bar, and it's all put together with that typical level of polish that will compel you to carry on playing regardless.



» [PC DOS] Some stages feature plenty of traps like flaming torches and rolling boulders that must be avoided.



» [PC DOS] She may be a nimble climber, but Jill is no swimmer. Fall in water and you'll instantly lose a life.

Sprint 2

As one of Atari's first microprocessor games and the ancestor of subsequent top-down racers, Sprint 2 represented a huge shift in arcade games. Co-developers Lyle Rains and Dennis Koble recall for us the birth of a true classic



IN THE KNOW

- **» PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- **» DEVELOPER:** KEE GAMES
- **» PLATFORM:** ARCADE
- **» RELEASED:** 1976
- **» GENRE:** RACING

Retro Gamer: What were the origins of *Sprint 2*?

Dennis Koble: I can't exactly remember where the game idea came from, except that I didn't come up with it. I was hired to do a job and that's the job they gave me. I recall being handed a quad-ruled pad and becoming immersed in assembly 6502 programming, and I believe the entire game was done in 4K.

The team consisted of myself, engineer Howard Delman, and a super tech, Dan Van Elderen, who later became president of Atari Games. And then there was Lyle Rains, senior game guru/engineer, who had a brilliant sense of gameplay and often made small but critical suggestions regarding how to improve the game.

The facilities were small and old and I shared the front office near the entrance with Howard and Dan. The office was so cramped that if we put our feet up on our desks, there wasn't room left to enter or leave! When it rained, the water would seep under the wall and soak the carpet, giving it a nice mildew smell…

Lyle Rains: I've no clear memories on the genesis of *Sprint 2* either, but I can guess, with a certain degree of confidence, that it was mostly a matter of Atari never wanting to be too far from the release of a new and improved driving game. The *Gran Trak 10, Gran Trak 20, Indy 800* and *Le Mans* games had been consistent moneymakers for Atari and its customers. By 1976, we were working with microprocessor-controlled game systems, and would have wanted an updated product in the category. Although visually related to the *Gran Trak* games designed for Atari by Cyan Engineering, the electronics system was completely redesigned for microprocessor control.

RG: Since this was one of Atari's first mass-produced microprocessor games, did you find the technology liberating or restrictive? Were there things you had to avoid due to technical limitations?

LR: It was so early in the microprocessor game era that we didn't know what we didn't know. And the processors were so slow and limited that we continued to solve some problems in hardware that would later be handled by software alone. But the key difference was the amount of tuning you could apply to the gameplay that would have been impractical in the hardware-design era. *Sprint 2* was faster and more exciting than its predecessors, because we had more freedom to make it so.

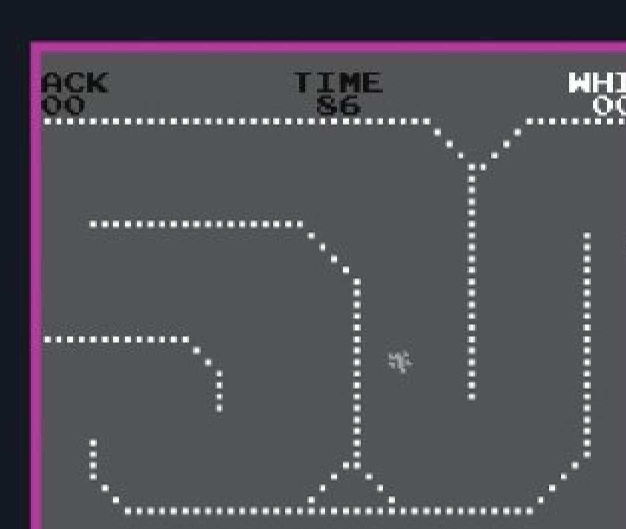
RG: What was the thinking behind the controls – steering wheel, four gears – and *Sprint 2*'s timer-based gameplay as opposed to the lap model later used in the likes of *Super Sprint*?

LR: As I said, *Sprint 2* was styled as an update of previous games, so we kept what worked and changed what didn't. Nobody liked going backwards in *Gran Trak 20*, so we got rid of reverse and went to a four-speed gearbox. This also got rid of the need for a brake pedal, because lifting off the gas was the brake. *Sprint 2* was all about drifting around the track.

As for the timed game, that was the same as *Gran Trak 20*. Lap-based games and lap qualifiers just hadn't occurred to us yet.

DK: The gameplay mechanics were straightforward in those days. You raced around the track and either won or lost and eventually the game timed out. The goal was to give you a couple of minutes of fun gameplay







» [Arcade] The neon-coloured *Sprint 8* added complexity in the form of more cars, tougher tracks and a brake pedal.

“It was so early in the microprocessor era that we didn’t know what we didn’t know”

SPRINT SEQUELS

BEFORE *SUPER SPRINT* arrived in 1986, there were three other *Sprint* sequels. “*Sprint* was done later with minor code changes for its randomised track and single set of controls,” says Dennis. “*Sprint 4* and *Sprint 8* were done by Steve Calfee, another programmer at Atari, using my code base.” By that time, Dennis wasn’t involved, since he’d become manager of the VCS group. “But the game series was very popular, and I collected royalties for years, even though I was in the consumer division. I was the only non-coin-op person to make a quarterly trip to coin-op to collect my cheque, and they always gave me a hard time about that!”



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

AVALANCHE
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1978

FIRE TRUCK (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1978

ASTEROIDS
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1979

for a quarter. The game options were simple, set by switches in the cabinet. I think we included four coin modes, some timer settings, and a switch-controlled oil slick, which was a little graphic made up of four eight-by-eight sprites that caused you to skid when you drove over it.

LR: The oil slicks were also present in *Gran Trak 20*, as dark rectangles on the track – we just made them look prettier!

RG: What was the thinking behind the computer-controlled cars, and how did you deal with AI in 1976?

LR: From a player’s standpoint, the addition of computer-controlled cars was a major feature. They weren’t truly competitive but added moving obstacles to the racing action, and improved single-player racing. We didn’t use the term ‘artificial intelligence’ for computer-controlled elements at that time, as such concepts were still in their infancy.

There had been a pseudo-random flying saucer in *Computer Space*, and I’d engineered a simple hardware AI in *Jet Fighter* two years earlier. The enemy jet would fly straight, then bank pseudo-randomly. If he sensed you were in the quadrant in which he was aimed, he would fire. It was surprisingly effective. That was my total experience with game AI up to that point.

Rather than have the *Sprint 2* AI cars fixed on rails, we wanted something that seemed less repeatable. I came up with a concept for creating a map of vectors to tell the AI cars which way they should drive. They would align themselves to the current vector and drive themselves around the track in a non-repeating path. There was a switch you could set that would show arrows on the racetrack, so you could watch the automatic steering in action.

RG: How did you create *Sprint 2*’s graphics and sound?

DK: For graphics, I was given a ‘standard issue’ pen and quad-ruled pad and drew everything, based on the hardware constraints – eight-by-eight sprites, for instance. Artists at the time only did the side panel and control panel artwork – they weren’t involved in a game’s creation!

The sounds were done by Howard Delman, sitting there with a variety of resistors and a soldering gun. He’d make a beep and I would say, ‘That’s too high,’ so he’d substitute a different resistor and I’d say, ‘That’s too low,’ and so on – very high-tech!

RG: And how did you go about testing the game?

LR: We’d spend hours playing these games during lunch hours and after hours. Standing on one’s left foot for long periods of time – since your right foot was on the pedal, left hand on the wheel and right on the gearstick – would cause sufficient pain to leave one hobbling around for hours afterwards. Thankfully, I still have my original hips and knees, so I guess it wasn’t too bad!



STREET FIGHTER II

20 YEARS OF FIREBALLS

IT'S ONE OF THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT FIGHTING GAMES OF ALL TIME. IT'S ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL GAMES EVER MADE. IT'S ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS WHY MANY OF US CALL OURSELVES GAMERS TODAY. ON THIS, THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF STREET FIGHTER II, WE LOOK BACK ON AN ALL-TIME CLASSIC TO FIND OUT WHERE IT ALL WENT SO VERY, VERY RIGHT

S*treet Fighter II* means many things to many people. It's bragging to a disbelieving crowd about your ability to pull off a Dragon Punch every time, if only to see their expressions when you send Ryu skyward on command. It's peering over someone's shoulder, waiting to show the reigning champ a Spinning Piledriver or six. It's saving change in a different pocket just so you have your stake ready next time you find yourself near the arcade. It's pretending to be sick in order to spend a day off school in bed while you practise Guile's redizzy loop on the SNES. It's all about the fight. It's all about being the best. But whatever most stands out for you about Capcom's seminal fighting game, one simple truth stands clear above all rose-tinted reflection: *Street Fighter II* was one of the single most important and influential games of its time, and its impact is still evident two decades later.

While it'd be hard to credit Capcom with fathering the fighting game as a genre, the worst outcome to this metaphor for the Japanese studio would be for it to come across as anything less than the best foster parent of all time. 1987's *Street Fighter* employed concepts previously seen in a number of other pioneering one-on-one fighters just as its sequel would four years later. But while the original proved somewhat unremarkable outside of gimmicks like pressure-sensitive buttons and forcing players to discover Ryu's special moves for themselves, its follow-up was quite the opposite: a remarkable game in pretty much every respect.

Following the same script as the fighters that came before it – and the same one that is still employed by most to this day – *Street Fighter II* brought together a cast of unlikely stars and pitted them against one another purely in the name of finding out who was the strongest. The eight initial characters showcased a strange mix of stereotyping and the downright bizarre, and while a Japanese sumo and a US Air Force pilot might not seem so out of the ordinary compared to a Brazilian wildman or an Indian yoga expert who can breathe fire and stretch his limbs at will, no character can be taken at face value. Honda's gravity-defying cross-screen dive, Chun Li's ability to kick with more legs than she actually has… Even the two seemingly normal gi-sporting rivals, Ryu and Ken, could toss balls of energy at one another, turn into human helicopters and, in Ken's case, even punch people so hard that they caught fire. There was something about these characters that appealed in the same way as age-old stories of superheroes and legendary martial

Developers remember...

ANDREAS AXELSSON



Co-founder: Digital Illusions

I CAN'T REMEMBER when I played it the first time, but if I'm being honest, I never really liked it. The game certainly looked cool, and I quite enjoyed watching others play it, but it never got me hooked. I always played *IK+* and *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* instead. Then I more or less ignored the genre until *Virtua Fighter* and *Tekken* showed up.

Developers remember...

JIM BAGLEY



Developer: Ocean

I FIRST PLAYED *Street Fighter II* on the Mega Drive, back in 1995, if I recall correctly. It had been out a little while, but I wanted to get it, as I'd heard it was good.

I used to play against my girlfriend, but she kept going Chun Li, because she fares well for the button-bashing technique, especially when I'm Ryu. I'd be trying to learn the moves, but her button bash would always get me when trying to master the fancier moves, so I'd end up having to figure out a way to get in and do a move before she'd do her kicking.

My favourite character for fun was Chun Li, because it sounded like she said "chicken fried chips" as she did her helicopter kick.

My favourite for playing was Ryu because he was the closest to Bruce Lee, and I loved all the Bruce Lee movies.

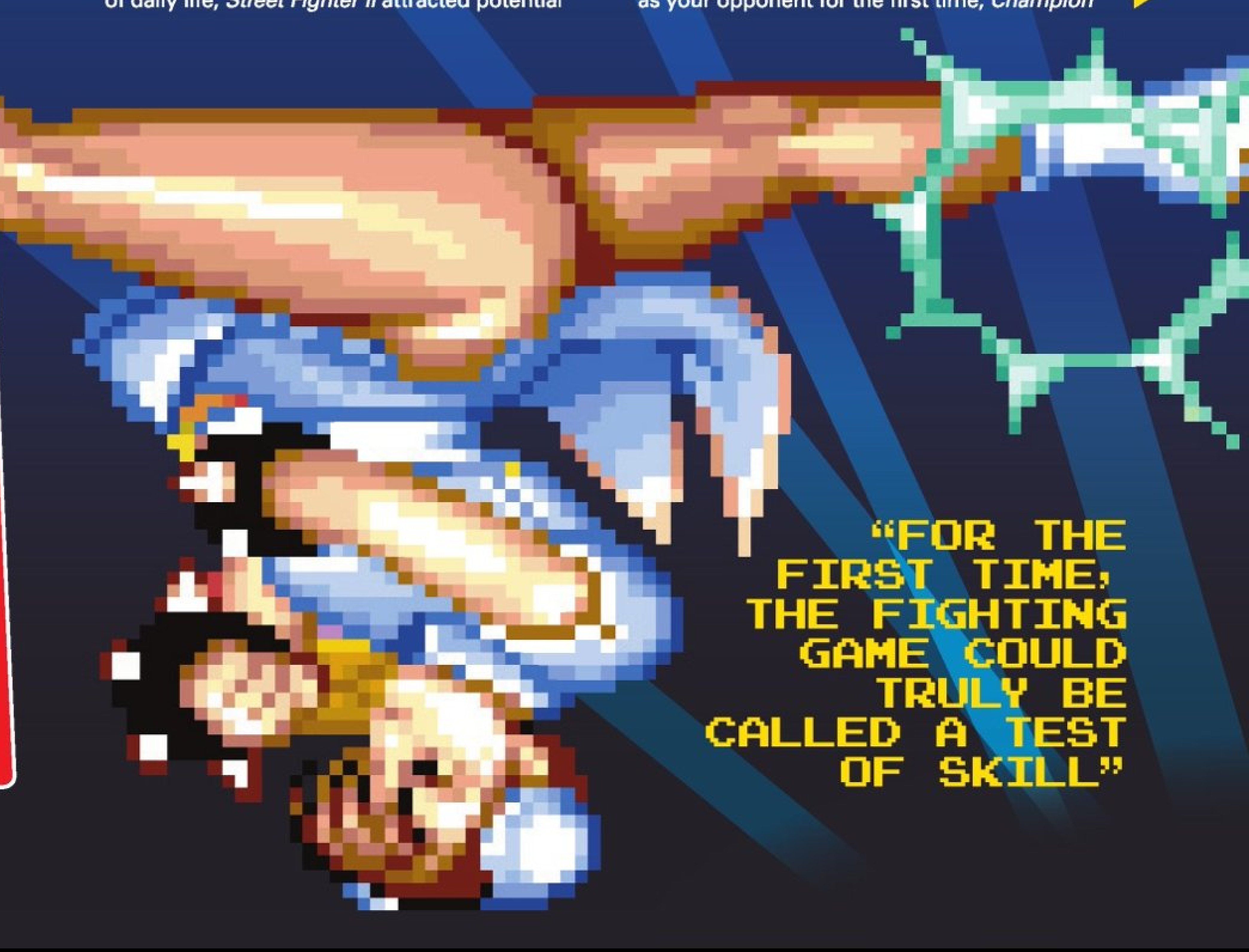
artists had done for decades and even centuries before, each character here representing their country as one of the finest warriors in the respective land and each bringing with them not only the weight of a nation's expectation but a unique way to play that meant they attracted different sorts of players.

Although basic commands were constant across the cast, special move execution varied from fighter to fighter in a way that is still used in modern fighting games to add diversity. Some prefer 'fireball' or 'hurricane' motions – the prevalence of such terminology is just one of many examples of *Street Fighter*'s impact on gaming – while others would rather go with more defensively oriented 'charge' characters. It was an ingenious way to avoid alienating players that couldn't do one or the other type of moves, although even that had previously not been entirely down to player execution. Input detection had always been a hit-or-miss affair, and quicker games especially would often struggle to keep up with a player's precise inputs. But where once special moves had been more luck than judgement in many games, Capcom's CPS board and the firm's arcade prowess, as proven in classics like *Final Fight* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, made *Street Fighter II* one of the first games of its ilk where players could expect to see a fireball every time they rolled the stick from down to towards and slapped a punch button. The onus had shifted off the game and onto the player, and, for the first time, the fighting game could truly be called a test of skill.

It was this almost gladiatorial aspect that brought players flocking to arcades, Capcom's fighter providing a competitive gaming outlet like no other, and whereas arcades had previously been places for the pursuit of high scores or just a few minutes away from the humdrum rigour of daily life, *Street Fighter II* attracted potential players for an entirely new reason: the chance to actively beat the hell out of a friend, rival or even a total stranger rather than buddy up with them against the computer or place your initials above theirs in the high score table. Queues would form, stacks of coins ready and guaranteeing that those in line had their shot at greatness. But as well as being able to challenge a machine's current champion, many would hover in an altogether more passive capacity, simply spectating in the hope of seeing something spectacular that they'd never seen in this game – or perhaps any other – before.

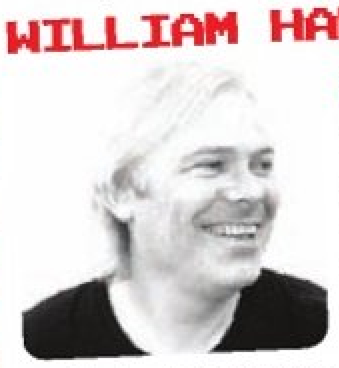
Not content with changing the face of arcade gaming forever, Capcom soon turned its attention elsewhere. With the booming popularity of home consoles, it was only a matter of time before *Street Fighter* found its way into bedrooms and living rooms the world over. A real coup for Nintendo, *Street Fighter II* launched exclusively on the SNES the year after its arcade debut, and it proved to be one of the biggest guns on either side in the 16-bit console war. Between this and *Super Mario Kart*, it was rare to find a SNES owner who didn't have two controllers, and the same competitive streak that Capcom had brought out in arcade-goers translated perfectly to a home setting, where siblings or friends could clash endlessly without having to worry about feeding coins into a machine. You've probably since realised this, but most of the kids who used to come back to your house after school to play *Street Fighter II* didn't actually like you; you were just a means to an end. Harsh but, in many cases, true.

As no stranger to the arcade scene, Capcom knew it was onto a winner. With a few gameplay tweaks and extra moves as well as the opportunity to play as the boss characters and, perhaps more importantly, the same character as your opponent for the first time, *Champion*



Developers remember...

WILLIAM HARBISON



Developer: Ocean

THE FIRST TIME I saw *Street Fighter II* I thought, 'That's a nice-looking game that I'm going to be crap at playing.' I was impressed by its graphics and the characters, but it was the speed that scared me the most. That and the fact that everyone I played had memorised the moves of a specific character and could destroy you with a barrage of special moves. I couldn't be bothered with all that; I just randomly mashed the buttons and hoped for the best.

I usually played as Chun Li. It wasn't because of her attack moves, or the back story of her wanting revenge for the death of her father; it was just because she wore a really skimpy outfit and you could sometimes see her knickers.

"FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE FIGHTING GAME COULD TRULY BE CALLED A TEST OF SKILL"

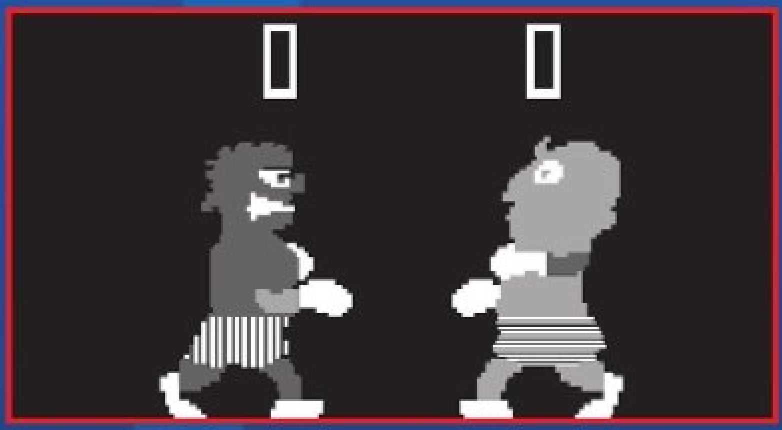
THE ROAD TO VICTORY

The influential fighting games we were all playing before Street Fighter II changed everything

HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMP

DEVELOPER: SEGA | **FIRST RELEASED:** 1976

Considering Sega's later 3D revolution within the genre with *Virtua Fighter*, it's somewhat fitting that it was the first developer to actually create a proper arcade fighting game. Immediately recognisable in arcades thanks to the huge boxing gloves that adorned each cabinet. *Heavyweight Champ* featured two large boxers who would pummel each other into oblivion. The side-on action, which again would go on to become a hallmark of the genre, featured large, impressive-looking sprites, while the elaborate controllers enabled you to pull off high and low punches, as well as hard strikes.

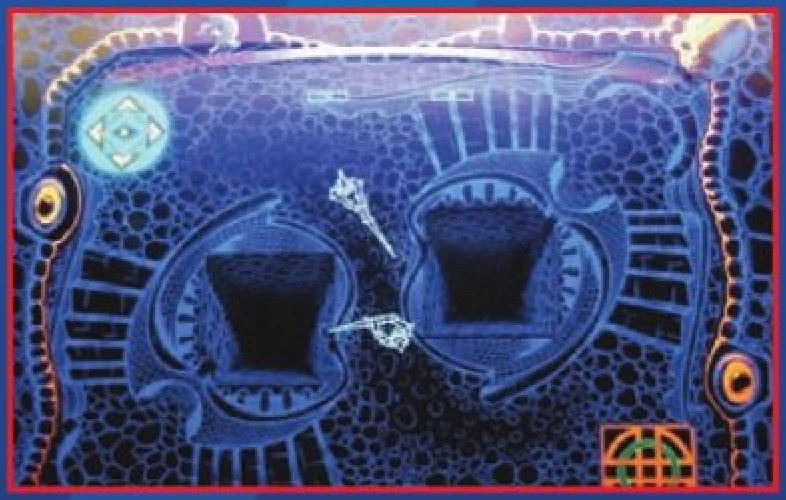


» This is our illustrative interpretation of *Heavyweight Champ*, as the original arcade game can't be emulated.

WARRIOR

DEVELOPER: VECTORBEAM | **FIRST RELEASED:** 1979

Warrior set a number of precedents for the genre. It was the first fighting game to feature vector graphics and remains one of the only one-on-one fighters to utilise a top-down view of the action. It was originally due to feature a twin-stick design that would later be popularised in games such as *Robotron: 2084*, but financial constraints made this impossible. *Warrior* is also notable for being the first fighting game to feature weapons – the duelling knights both used swords – and while we're thinking about it, the first in the genre to include knights as well.



KARATE CHAMP

DEVELOPER: TECHNOS | **FIRST RELEASED:** 1984

Published by Data East and designed by the company that would later go on to create hits such as *Double Dragon* and *Renegade*, *Karate Champ* is arguably one of the most important early fighting games. It utilised a twin-stick approach that enabled players to pull off a variety of different moves and went on to be ported to a number of popular home computers and consoles. *Karate Champ* featured a simple point system that required the player to score two points to continue to the next round. Once an opponent was defeated, there would be a bonus round.



YIE AR KUNG-FU

DEVELOPER: KONAMI | **FIRST RELEASED:** 1985

Available on everything from the ZX Spectrum to Microsoft's Game Room service, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* is a classic fighter that made a massive impact when it was released in 1985. It's important for a number of reasons. It's one of the earliest examples of an energy bar, and features a number of different fighters and weapons to fight against. Unlike *Karate Champ* and *Warrior*, the different fighters range in styles and appearance, while the weapons themselves are also vastly different, ranging from clubs to throwing stars. It's also the first ever fighter to feature female combatants.



IK+

DEVELOPER: ARCHER MACLEAN | **FIRST RELEASED:** 1987

Archer Maclean's *International Karate* may have been a huge success for publisher System 3, but we'd argue that its excellent sequel was not only a far better game, but also an incredibly important moment for the genre. Whereas all previous fighters featured simple one-on-one action between two characters, *IK+* mixed things up by throwing a third CPU-controlled fighter into the mix. It was a masterstroke that added greatly to the genre but was also an absolute riot when played with two friends. It's amazing that so few other fighters have used the idea since.

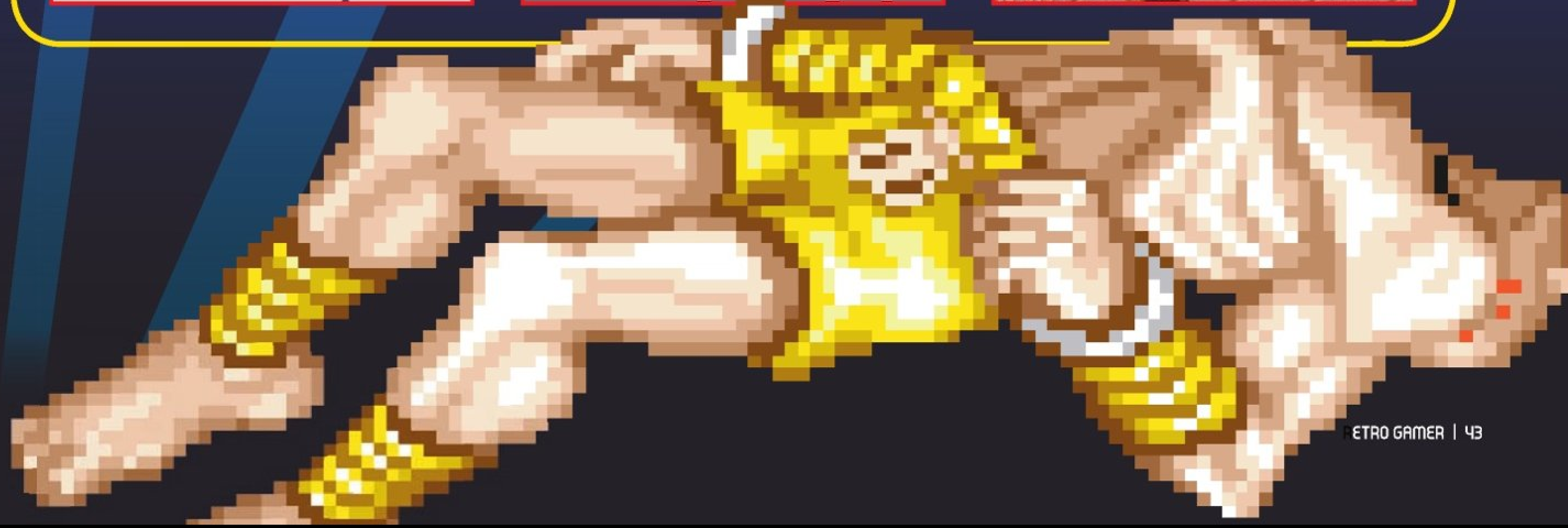


STREET FIGHTER

DEVELOPER: CAPCOM | **FIRST RELEASED:** 1987

Street Fighter marked Capcom's very first entry into the genre, but it certainly wouldn't be its last. While the game itself was rather poor, even at the time, its importance cannot be underestimated, and not just because it paved the way for its sequel. In addition to introducing Ryu and Ken to the world, *Street Fighter* boasted a mammoth six-button control setup and alternate arcade layout that featured pressure-sensitive buttons. It also introduced hidden special moves, including the fireball and Dragon Punch, that required the player to pull off various joystick motions in order to activate them.





Developers remember...

SIMON BUTLER



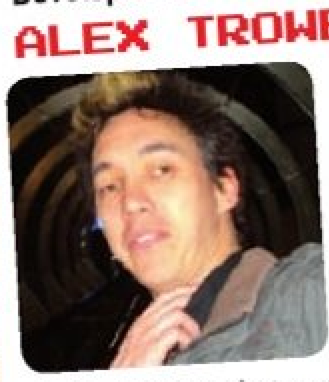
Developer: Ocean

MY FIRST THOUGHTS, once I got my jaw back off the floor, was, 'I'll never master those moves,' and for once in my life I am quite happy to say that I was correct. I usually went for the monkey-fisted button-mashing technique that could, if done correctly, throw even the most talented of players off their game; mostly due to the noise and the amount of swearing.

My favourite character after the beguiling Chun Li was Ryu. He seemed to sum up what the whole thing was about.

Developers remember...

ALEX TROWERS



Developer: Bullfrog

THE FIRST VERSION of *SF II* I played was on the SNES. We got it into the office and it became the lunchtime weapon of choice. Prior to that, our fighting had consisted of *Exploding Fist* and *IK+*. *SF II* made beating the crap out of each other so much more accessible and, with some variety to the characters, there was always someone on hand for a kicking.

I firmly believed I shouldn't have a favourite character and that a good player should be able to play any of them. In fact, we used to play winner stays on and I'd pick a random character then change to the next one in a clockwise fashion. I used to see how many laps of the character select screen I could do before someone beat me. This was a slightly cocky approach, only ended when we hired Mike Man. He smacked me down without me even laying a hit on him.

"CAPCOM AND SNK'S RELATIONSHIP BLOSSOMED INTO A SEARING RIVALRY"

Edition was the first in the inevitable string of follow-ups to the arcade smash. In a move oddly reflective of Capcom's somewhat mercenary approach to DLC today, the game was originally introduced as a standalone cabinet only to maximise revenue, then later released in kit form once as much as possible had been bled from the more lucrative alternative. But as well as official updates from Capcom, *Street Fighter*'s popularity had ensured that it had also garnered attention from a selection of less official sources. All manner of hacked and butchered versions of *Street Fighter II* popped up, messing with game speed and special moves – now-famous versions like *Black Belt* altered game mechanics to allow players to fill the screen with fireballs, perform specials in the air and even switch characters mid-fight years before the *Versus* series came along and introduced tagging for real. Capcom was understandably quick to stop others from milking its cash cow and came down hard on these knock-offs, in the process releasing a third version in *Hyper Fighting*.

These arcade variants weren't the first time tenacious coders had tried to sneak food off Capcom's plate while it wasn't looking, either. Before *Street Fighter II* was ported to the SNES, a number of unsanctioned ports found their way onto the NES under various names and guises. Many even tried to pass themselves off as the real deal but this seldom went further than the dodgy packaging and slightly wonky cartridge label, the games themselves usually the same few shoddy hack jobs like *Master Fighter*. This shameless rip-off lifted characters, backdrops and even music from the arcade original, downgrading them for the inferior hardware. But the real hit came in the gameplay department, the coders clearly incapable of re-creating the real reason why *Street Fighter* was so successful, and even though later versions did manage to include all of the characters and more, it was all for nought without the precise, competitive thrill of the fight. *Master Fighter* somehow made it to six iterations, though Capcom's own home port really served to show up these second-rate knock-offs for what they were.

But it wasn't just the hackers that the commotion surrounding *Street Fighter II* had attracted. Fellow arcade veteran SNK had also taken its first steps into the brave new world of the competitive fighter, and while *Fatal Fury* might not have offered much in the way of competition, it was but the start of what would blossom into a searing rivalry. Though *Street Fighter II* hogged the limelight, the *Art Of Fighting* games and later the annual *King Of Fighters* and *Samurai Shodown* games showed a growing competency in the rival firm. But in gaming, getting in first counts for everything – Nintendo's dominance of the 8-bit console scene with the NES and Sony's incredible success with the PlayStation 2 are testament to this. For all its demonstrations of power,

THE NEW CHALLENGERS

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO talk about *Street Fighter II* without mentioning the fourth iteration of the game. Dubbed *The New Challengers*, it introduced four new characters to the roster, swelling the number to an impressive 16.

Cammy was arguably the most popular thanks to her tight buns, skimpy outfit and distinct fighting style. She's trained in Shadaloo assassination techniques and has a confusing back story that involves brainwashing, M Bison and Delta Red, an imaginary task force within Britain's MI6.

T Hawk also has connections with Bison, but his are a lot more obvious and easier to understand. M Bison killed his father, Arroyo Hawk, and Thunder Hawk is out for revenge. A proud Mexican, he enters the tournament in order to reclaim his homeland from Bison. He was originally going to be called Geronimo, but it was deemed too offensive at the time and was eventually changed.

Another popular addition to *The New Challengers*' roster was Fei Long. An unabashed tribute to Bruce Lee, he's a famed action star from Hong Kong who enters the tournament in order to prove his skill. There's a touching reference to both Bruce Lee and his son Brandon, who died shortly before the release of the game. Along with Cammy, he remains our favourite fighter out of *The New Challengers*.

Which leads us to the unloved and oft-misunderstood Dee Jay. This over-the-top Jamaican kickboxer is a break-dancer and recording artist and was based on the popular kickboxer Billy Blanks. He is the only *Street Fighter* character to ever be designed by an American – in this case James Goddard – and it was rumoured that the Japanese developers at Capcom were loath to use him in other *Street Fighter* games because of that. Rather than any inherent xenophobia, we'd argue that he's just not that good a character, with his attitude rather at odds with many of the other characters in the franchise. Oh, and before we sign off, let's just mention the addition of another character that would go on to feature in many later games: Akuma. First popping up in *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* as a hidden character, he has gone on to become one of the franchise's most popular fighters. Pull off his ridiculously extensive special and we'll respect you forever.







ROGUES' GALLERY

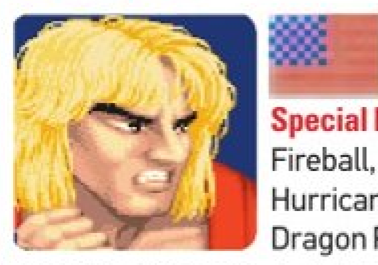
RYU



Special Moves: Fireball, Hurricane Kick, Dragon Punch

ALONG WITH KEN, he's the only surviving member of *Street Fighter* to appear as a playable character in its hit sequel. The main protagonist, he's an incredibly close-guarded individual with a love for constant training and an overwhelming need to do a 'Kane' and find himself at the end of each game. Like Ken, he's a master of the Shotokan karate fighting style.

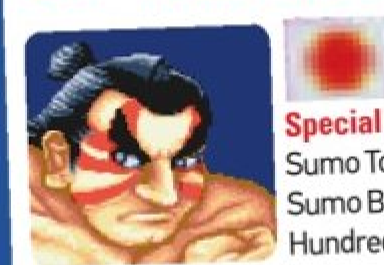
KEN



Special Moves: Fireball, Hurricane Kick, Dragon Punch

BEST FRIEND AND rival of Ryu, Ken has appeared in every main *Street Fighter* game. Like Ryu, he is a master of the Shotokan karate style and also shared the same tutor (*Street Fighter IV*'s Gouken). A little-known fact to the non-*Street Fighter* hardcore is that the girl he marries at the end of the game, Eliza, is actually the sister of Guile's wife, making the pair brothers-in-law.

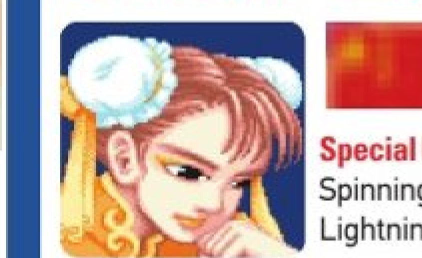
E HONDA



Special Moves: Sumo Torpedo, Sumo Butt Crush, Hundred Hand Slap

LIKE RYU, E HONDA hails from the Land of the Rising Sun. Their fighting styles differ greatly, however, with the barrel-chested Honda being a master of sumo wrestling. Famed for his wickedly devastating Hundred Hand Slap, he enters the *Street Fighter* tournament because he feels that the rest of the world doesn't share the same reverence for sumo wrestling that Japan does.

CHUN LI



Special Moves: Spinning Bird Kick, Lightning Kick

CHUN LI INSTANTLY stood out in *Street Fighter II* due to being the only female combatant. A Chinese undercover agent for Interpol, she enters the tournament in order to get close to founder M Bison and avenge the murder of her father, who was killed during his investigation into the dictator's activities. She uses a defensive style of tai chi in the game and focuses on kicks.

BLANKA



Special Moves: Horizontal Ball Attack, Vertical Ball Attack, Electric Thunder

KNOWN AS JIMMY to his mother and sporting a feral appearance and shocking green skin, Blanka is one of *Street Fighter*'s most recognisable characters. His skills with electricity are due to an electrical storm that caused his plane to crash, while his green skin is from his constant use of chlorophyll to better blend in with his jungle surroundings. His fighting style is a wild version of capoeira.

ZANGIEF



Special Moves: Spinning Pile Driver, Spinning Lariat, Air Atomic Drop

THE RED CYCLONE loves underground wrestling, breaking the rules and wrestling bears, which is where he gets his distinctive scars. While slow on his feet, the Russian wrestler is not to be trifled with due to his amazing grapple skills and his sheer strength and power. A friend of Mikhail Gorbachev and lover of all things Russian, he's an imposing figure with fists the size of hams.

GUILE



Special Moves: Sonic Boom, Flash Kick

LIKE CHUN LI, Guile's entry into the tournament is fuelled by revenge. He's desperate to track down M Bison, who killed his best friend, Charlie, who later pops up as a playable character in the prequel, *Street Fighter Alpha*. Guile's fighting style is a mixture of military-trained martial arts and pro wrestling techniques. The second pair of dog tags he wears belongs to Charlie.

DHALSIM



Special Moves: Yoga Fireball, Yoga Flame, Yoga Teleport

DHALSIM HAS MASTERED both yoga and the use of flame in order to create a deadly fighting style. A master of keeping his opponents back due to his stretchy limbs, he's a distinct-looking character second only to Blanka in terms of sheer weirdness. Despite being a pacifist, he enters the *Street Fighter* tournament in order to deliver water to his village.

BALROG



Special Moves: Dashing Punch, Dashing Uppercut, Turn Around Punch

THIS BRAZEN BOXER was known in Japan as M Bison and looks suspiciously similar to former heavyweight champ Mike Tyson. His name was changed for Western gamers, although it's obvious who he's based on. He's the only character in the game that doesn't fight with his feet and as a result uses six punch buttons instead of the traditional three kick, three punch layout.

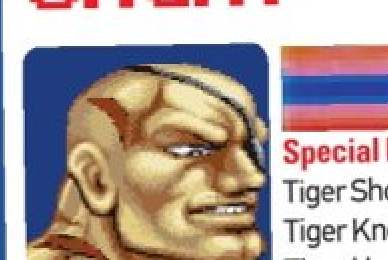
VEGA



Special Moves: Tumbling Claw, Wall Spring, Screaming Eagle

KNOWN AS BALROG in Japan, Vega is a masked villain and the only character in *Street Fighter II* to wield an actual weapon. Known as the Spanish Ninja and sporting a love for bullfighting, he's a specialist in Spanish ninjutsu whose obsessive and narcissistic need to protect his beautiful face – hence the mask – is second only to his outrageous and flamboyant moves.

SAGAT



Special Moves: Tiger Shot, Tiger Knee, Tiger Uppercut

ALONG WITH KEN and Ryu, he's the only character in *Street Fighter II* to appear in the original game. Specialising in Muay Thai, he is the final boss in *Street Fighter*, who Ryu and Ken must face after they defeat his apprentice, Adon. He received his impressive scar after his skirmish with Ryu at the end of the original game, and he lost his eye in a fight with Dan Hibiki's father, Go.

M.BISON



Special Moves: Hellfire Torpedo, Scissor Knee, Head Stomp

KNOWN AS VEGA in Japan, M Bison is the leader of the crime syndicate Shadaloo. He not only hosts the annual *Street Fighter* tournament but is also the last boss faced in the game. Specialising in an infused form of Psycho Power, he's a dangerous combatant and has long-running grudges against several other fighters, in particular Chun Li and Guile and later Cammy and T Hawk.





THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FIST

It might not have been the first fighter to hit arcades, but it was easily one of the most influential. We asked Retro Gamer readers to give us their opinions on Street Fighter II

THE FIRST TIME YOU SAW STREET FIGHTER II

Mootown
The first time I saw *Street Fighter II* was Julian Rignall in *CVG* reporting on the arcade version from a Japanese trade show or something. I remember the characters looking super-chunky, but everyone was really confusing, as it had six buttons. It all seemed so complicated!

theantmeister
At my local arcade. *World Warrior*, it was. There was a queue to play it! I was never very good at it, so I had to pester strangers to find out how to do the special moves.

gmintyfresh
The first time I actually saw the game running was round at my mate's house. He was an early importer of the SNES and in the week or so that he'd received his hideously expensive copy of the game he'd developed some formidable skills. By the time I played him he proceeded to trounce me nearly every single fight, but I didn't care because I enjoyed every second of this amazing new game.

Freestyler
The first thing I remembered about it was the SIX buttons. The thought of having so many moves available and that you had to remember was really astonishing. Plus at that time player's guides were rare as hell so you really had to learn and remember your combos.

ShadowMan
I think I first saw the game in action on a free *Official Nintendo Magazine* video, which gave you a brief rundown on each character's special moves and basic tactics. After watching the video several times I was already hooked on the game! I loved the fact that nearly all of the characters were quite different to each other, with flashy-looking special moves.

YOUR FAVOURITE CHARACTER

DPrinny
In the past it was Ryu, as I could do fireball spam. Now it's E Honda or Blanka. Honda for his beer belly six-pack and Blanka, as there's some kind of resemblance.

Delbert_trout
Vega's been my boy ever since he was introduced as a playable character – I'd usually pick Honda or Blanka on the *World Warrior* cabs. He's about the only character I've ever been any good with.

Alarm
Ryu. Although Guile and Blanka are easier to play. I also liked playing as Dhalsim, as he was so different. Ryu for me is *Street Fighter II*.

IronMaidenRule
Favourite character would have to be Guile. His sweep kick was very powerful and he felt the most natural for my playing style.

HalcyonDaze00
Sagat. A really cool character with a great history. Bison is also an excellent character.

Skull Commander
Favourite character has to be Ken. He used to be my main pick back in the SNES days and my best friend would always pick Ryu, so our rivalry echoed the one on screen. Nowadays my enjoyment of him is ruined a bit by the endless matches against him over the years online, but he is a cool customer. Other than that, masked pervert Vega is a main for me – but obviously I couldn't play as him until *Champion Edition* came along.

WHY DOES IT REMAIN SO POPULAR?

Roo
It's the game that got the whole ball rolling. *Tekken*, *Dead Or Alive*, *Mortal Kombat*, *Virtua Fighter* – some of the most important games of the last 20 years, and they all owe it to *Street Fighter II*.

speedlolita
It defined what 2D versus fighting should be. *Mortal Kombat* was another sort of, but that was only popular for the gore – the gameplay hasn't held up well against the test of time. What I mean is, try comparing *Street Fighter II* to *Super Street Fighter IV*, for example, and you will see very few differences. The fact that thousands of people still play *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* to this day competitively is a tribute to how significant this series was.

Dam
It is so important because, like Roo says, it really kick-started the fighting game genre, and two arcades sprang up in my small town, and were busy every day, mainly because people came to play this game.

Street Fighter II was my favourite game of all time for a very long time. Many new *Street Fighter* games came and went – *Alpha*, *III*, the crossover games, although I don't like those personally – but still *Street Fighter II* was, in my opinion, the best game ever made. Now that title belongs to *Super Street Fighter IV*, which has surpassed *II* in every way, and with each play takes me right back to the feeling I had as a ten-year-old running to the arcade to get a few games in after school.

SNK was constantly on the back foot, and *Street Fighter*'s control over the market proved impossible to overthrow. Nevertheless, the battle continued for the whole of the Nineties and grew increasingly and amusingly aggressive – SNK's Ryo was a clear spoof of *Street Fighter*'s poster boys and, in response, Capcom would bring in useless taunt maniac Dan to parody a parody.

Long before Dan, however, came other new faces, with whom Capcom hoped to keep the world playing *Street Fighter II* forever. By strapping the word 'Super' on the front of the title and further tweaking the gameplay, the team had yet another hit on its hands before people had even managed to get their hands on the four new fighters. A final update in the form of a *Turbo* version added similar features to previous updates, though there was one particular ingenious addition that would later become a fighting staple: the Super meter. By filling the gauge through attacking, players could now end combos or matches in style with a powered-up version of a special move or canned combo. It was new. It was fresh. It was exciting. And to this day, seeing an explosion of colour as you best your opponent with your most powerful technique is just as empowering and rewarding as it ever was. *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* also added a new boss to irk those who thought themselves contenders, with Akuma showing up in place of Shadaloo dictator M Bison should a player reach him under strict conditions. He was cheap. He was *very* cheap.

So we've gone over the characters, the tight and surprisingly deep combat mechanics, and the game's impact on both arcade and home console scenes, but somehow we've come this far without mentioning one of *Street Fighter II*'s most beloved elements: the music. With a bespoke theme for each fighter, Capcom added yet more character to its combatants, and many of these themes stand up as some of the finest examples of game music ever committed to silicon. The energy of Ken's chugging accompaniment, the jangling strings of Chun Li's tune, the epic and unforgettable melodies that went with Ryu and Guile's stages… These are some truly timeless pieces of music, and even today you'll see everything from remixed versions to rock bands covering them. They still stand up and they're still all kinds of awesome. And Guile's theme really *does* go with everything. YouTube it if we've lost you…

While the past 20 years have served up all manner of fighters that cause *Street Fighter II* to show its age somewhat, the simple fact remains that none of them would even exist if

"THE THEMES ARE SOME OF THE FINEST GAME MUSIC EVER COMMITTED TO SILICON CHIPS"



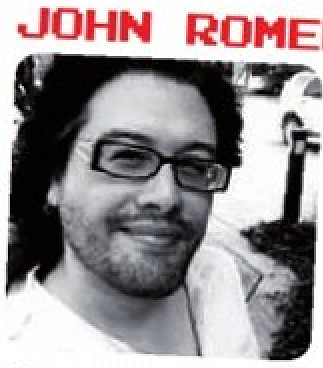
» [Arcade] Many CPS-1 arcade boards were cannibalised due to *Street Fighter II's* success, including *Strider*.



» [Amiga] It certainly looked the part, but the Amiga just couldn't replicate *Street Fighter II's* control method.

Developers remember...

JOHN ROMERO



Co-founder: id Software

THE FIRST TIME I played *Street Fighter II*, I could tell they got it RIGHT. I had been playing fighting games since they appeared in the Eighties with *Karate Champ*, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*, *Double Dragon*, *Bruce Lee*, etc. But when I started playing *Street Fighter II*, I could tell the feel of the game was just perfect, and the balance of the characters against each other was also spot-on. I played soooo much *SF II* it's crazy. I even played the hell out of the Super Nintendo version, one time playing a friend to see who could win 50 games total. We got to 49-49, and I got the final point. Those several hours were INTENSE.

it weren't for Capcom's influential classic. The firm itself later took the series off in a number of different directions, the *Alpha* series feeling more like an SNK fighter and *Street Fighter III* dividing opinion by banishing the familiar cast and relying primarily on new faces, further differentiating itself with the game-changing risk/reward Parry mechanic. Meanwhile, you had SNK finding the form it has always threatened with *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* and upstart Arc System Works coming in strong with *Guilty Gear*, but as the world fell under the spell of 3D graphics, it was already too late for the sprite-based fighter. *Street Fighter*'s time in the spotlight had come to an end by the mid-Nineties, a slew of three-dimensional alternatives wowing arcade-goers and home gamers alike just as any new technology does, and many consider this the end of the 2D fighter's dominance over gaming.



Years later, though, after countless requests from fans for a true *Street Fighter II* sequel – no, the pseudo-3D *EX* games don't count, because they never happened – Capcom had the chance to kick-start a renaissance of the very scene it started, and with *Street Fighter II*'s SNES port still the company's bestselling console release to this day, this was not an opportunity it was going to let slip by. With the long-awaited *Street Fighter IV*, Capcom's mission was simple: bring back the old characters and recapture the simple, accessible fighting action that really brought the firm to the world stage in the first place. It succeeded. Despite being far more technically complex than the original fighter, *Street Fighter IV* felt like playing *II* back in the day. We were wowed all over again by its flashy visuals and memorable score, lost hundreds more hours looking for new combos and ways in which to use moves, and, above all else, it simply evoked the exact same feel as the all-time classic and in the process made nostalgia glands swell to terrifying proportions. Perhaps one of the other most important aspects of *Street Fighter IV*, though, was that decent network code after many previous online attempts from various companies meant that the experience of being able to take on challengers – a massive part of the appeal of the original arcade game – was not only possible, but also excellent to boot. The lobby system that was integrated in both *Street Fighter IV* and, later, *Super Street Fighter IV* instilled a sense of community spirit that was rarely seen in the likes of *Dead Or Alive 4* or *Tekken 6*. Admittedly it was never quite the same as taking on proper opponents face-to-face, but it came a very close second. In one masterstroke, Capcom not only cemented its position as the king of fighters, but also made tournament fighting accessible again to a whole new generation of players.

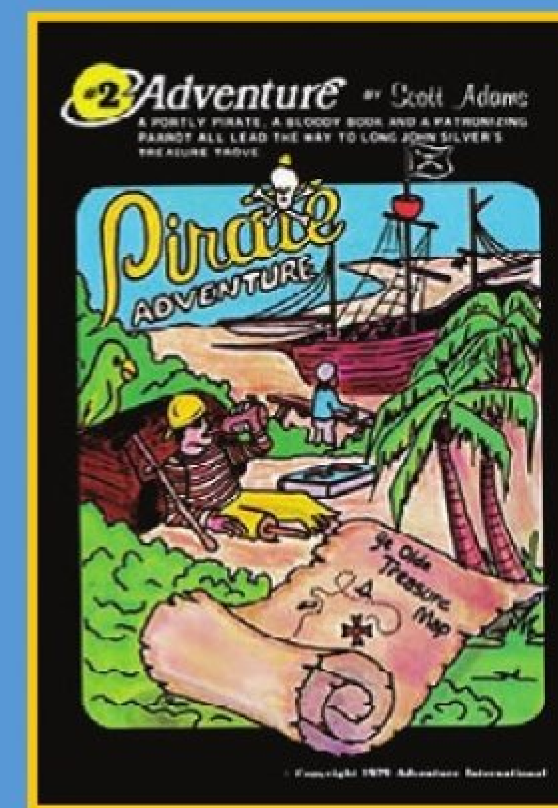
Sitting alongside bona fide gaming classics like *Pong*, *Pac-Man* and *Super Mario Bros*, *Street Fighter II* is largely responsible for the ongoing popularity of fighting games and has had an impact, both directly and indirectly, on every single entry in the genre to have been released in the last 20 years. But its influence stretches further still. It's the game that not only first allowed



players to let loose their competitive sides in a balanced and technically sound environment but also a catalyst in making competitive multiplayer gaming in general popular, arguably the origins of 'cybersports' as we know them today. Every game has an anniversary, but few truly deserve to be celebrated, and almost none to the extent of *Street Fighter II*. A game that defined a genre. A game that shaped a generation. A game that changed gaming itself forever. *That* is the kind of game that needs to be celebrated.



PIRATE ADVENTURE



Way back in Retro Gamer issue 5, Scott Adams was our first Desert Island Disks castaway. Now it's time for him to invite us to his treasure island. Paul Drury says yoho, everything spins around and suddenly he's elsewhere…

RG: Venomous snakes, hungry crocodiles and violent pirates reeking of rum, all under a tropical sun… *Pirate Adventure* was full of exotic dangers, but we understand the game itself almost succumbed to the searing heat…

Scott Adams: Alexis, my wife at the time, was getting really upset with my time on the computer. In fact, she put my only copies of the game in the oven and threatened to burn them if I didn't start paying attention to her! So I decided to let her throw out ideas and then try to incorporate them. I credited her as co-author on *Pirate Adventure*.

RG: That's certainly a clever way to solve a problem, Scott. The game does involve a great deal of musing as you try to work out the correct sequence in which to complete its tasks. Was this a conscious attempt to create an adventure with more of an ongoing narrative – an overall 'mission' to complete rather than simply collecting treasures?

SA: It seemed like it could be fun to be more 'final goal' orientated, rather than having an interim score like in *Adventureland*. In every game I wrote I always tried to do something new and unique that I hadn't done previously.

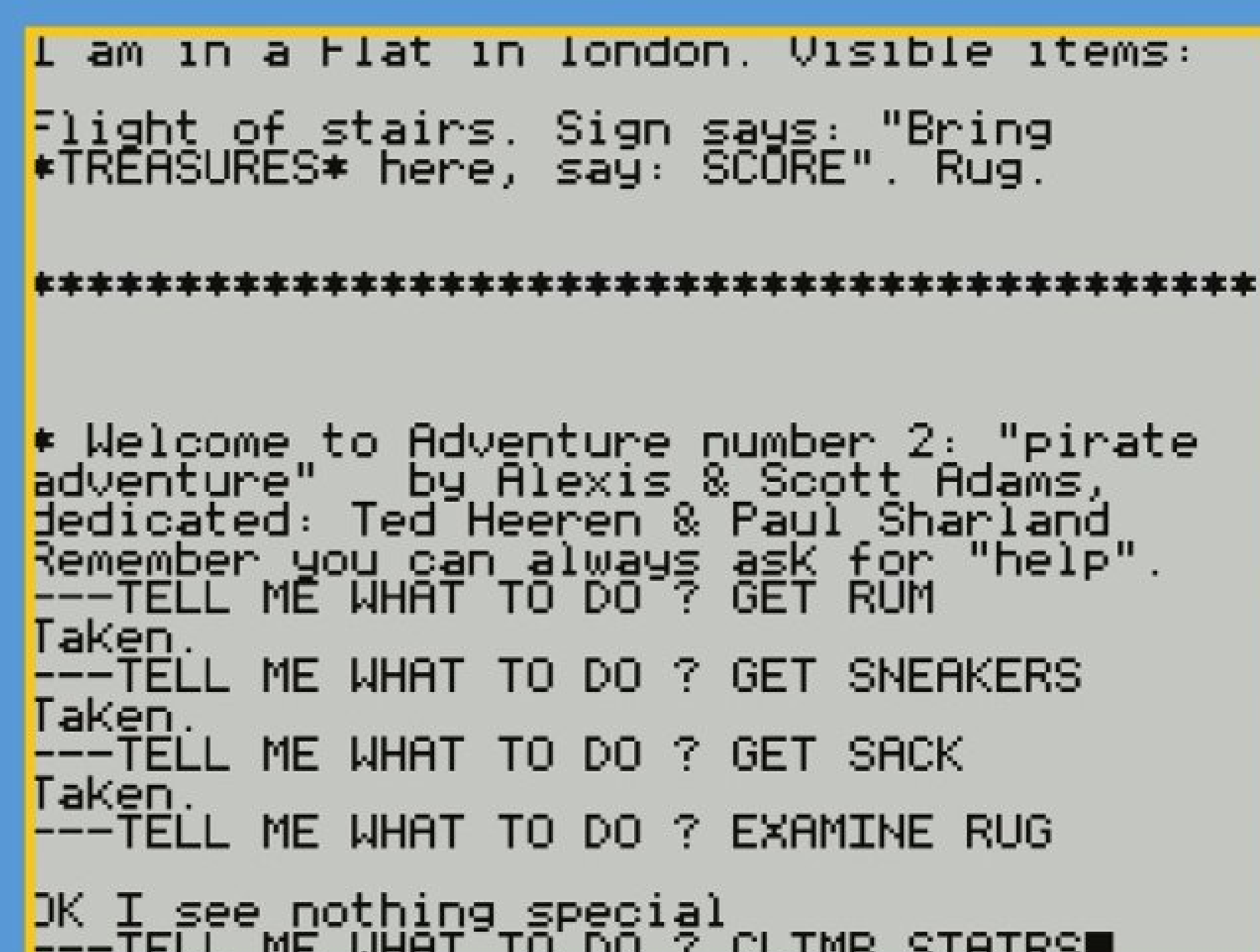
RG: We assume Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* was the key inspiration for the game's theme…

SA: Oh yes, it was a definite influence on the game, as was *Robinson Crusoe*. Obviously back then, the game had to be more solo than *Treasure Island*! Also, I had spent a number of years in the Caribbean and wanted to write a good island adventure. I'd spent a year and a half on Ascension Island, the last English colony island, which has no native inhabitants at all!

RG: So tell us, how did you go about creating the game – did you map it all out before coding?

SA: It was much more organic. I always started with the overall theme, then built a few introductory rooms. While writing these and testing them I would start getting the ideas for the rest of the game. I always try to have as many playtesters as I can. I see what things they are doing and trying, and then suddenly new puzzles, locations and ideas come to me. All my games are evolutionary in that





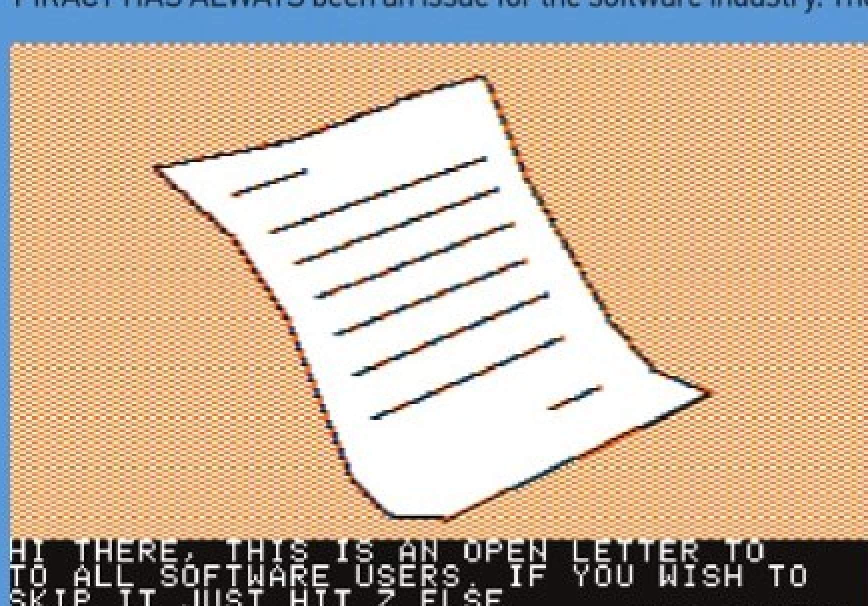
»[Spectrum] The game is dedicated to Ted Heeren and Paul Sharland, playtesters and work colleagues of Scott when he was at Stromberg Carlson.

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL
- » **DEVELOPER:** SCOTT ADAMS
- » **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS
- » **RELEASED:** 1978
- » **GENRE:** TEXT ADVENTURE

FOLLOW THE PIRATE CODE

PIRACY HAS ALWAYS been an issue for the software industry. The following selection of screenshots showed how Scott tackled the problem.









» [Apple II] A pirate with the shakes and a parrot with the munchies were just two of the game's challenges…

respect and not predesigned. I like to have an introduction to an adventure where you have to solve a number of puzzles before the game opens up.

RG: Ah, is that why you start the game in London and adventurers have to find the blood-stained book and 'Say YOHO' before being spirited away to the island?

SA: Well, *Treasure Island* starts in England, of course, but I thought the Admiral Benbow Inn would be a bit too big for me to encompass. By starting with the apartment (American) and calling it a flat (British) I thought I could make it more modern-day but still throw in a tiny bit of English flavour to the mix. And I'd not visited the UK back then. It was an exotic locale to me!

RG: In a nod to Long John Silver's feathered friend Captain Flint, the game includes a parrot that often chirps in with a suggestion or clue. Were you consciously trying to make *Pirate Adventure* easier than *Adventureland* had been?

SA: Yes, I wanted it to be more 'new player-friendly'. I learned a lot crafting *Adventureland*. I had no idea where I was going with it when I started. It was more a proof of concept of what I could do. I was part of computer club and would try to get members to play, both parents and children.

RG: On the subject of animals, we laughed at the game's mongoose that turns out to not be all it seems…

SA: I actually intended for the mongoose to solve the final problem and then I got the idea of 'What if it's just a red herring?' Then I had to come up with how to actually solve the snake problem and I think my solution fitted perfectly!

> **"I started the game in London to add a little English flavour… it was an exotic locale to me!"**

RG: You revisited the pirate theme with *Return To Pirate's Isle*, which only got a release on the Ti994a in 1983. What prompted you to weigh anchor once more?

SA: It was my first themed game and it was super-easy. I thought it was time for a more difficult approach to the problem. Unfortunately, the fall of Texas Instruments was the start of the end for Adventure International as well. The videogames industry was collapsing.

RG: And didn't you do a sequel to that game in 2000 for the PC?

SA: Yes, I did a remake of the game with full sentence parsing called *Return To Pirate's Island 2*. It's the only game I still charge for and you can buy a copy at www.msadams.com It was lots and lots of emails from fans that got me to do it.

RG: Your games certainly made a lasting impression on people. Those locations and phrases really have stayed with people…

SA: I got an email once from a Dr Simon Haynes. It read: "At work the other day, I was having a crisis. Nothing was going right and I was slightly losing it. A colleague came into the melee and asked how it was going. I said it was horrendous. He answered with two words, and then I really understood the impact that you and your games had on my generation and beyond. I understood that no matter what stress I was under at the time, in two hours I could escape to the weekend and chill. I had never discussed you with him, or your influence on me. He said two words: 'Say Yoho'."

Visit www.msadams.com for more information on Scott's wonderful games, information on The Inheritance, *a new text adventure in development, and links to his personal research on Lyme Disease, which his wife is currently battling.*



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ADVENTURELAND (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: TRS-80
YEAR: 1978

SORCERER OF CLAMORGUE CASTLE
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1984

RETURN TO PIRATE'S ISLAND 2
SYSTEM: PC
YEAR: 2000

SECRET COVE

FOR MANY UK gamers, the first taste of an Adams adventure was on the Vic-20, which hosted his first five releases on cartridge (with *Pirate Adventure* being renamed *Pirate's Cove*). However, when you turned on the machine, unlike with most other cartridge games, you found the usual Commodore start screen and cursor blinking back at you. Only by typing in 'SYS 32592' would your adventure begin. We always loved this construct, which felt like discovering a secret code and seemed to suggest that there is always an adventure to be had, stored away in memory somewhere, if you can just look beyond your usual reality. Scott explains the reason for this was more to do with practicalities, though. "The cartridge was extremely tiny, as was the actual RAM on the Vic motherboard. We had to squeeze out every byte from the cartridge we could to get the games to fit. The auto run feature was one that went by the wayside!"



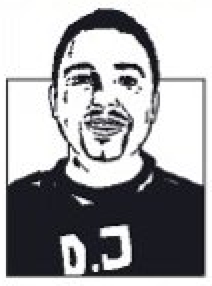




Die Hard

YIPPEE-KAY-YAY, PC GAMER

» RETROREVIVAL



» PC DOS
» DYNAMIX
» 1989

Considering the high-octane action that takes place during the film, it should come as no surprise to learn that *Die Hard* has been the subject of several videogames since its release.

Enjoyable efforts have appeared over the years, including Sega's superb *Die Hard Arcade* and Probe Entertainment's excellent *Die Hard Trilogy*, but we'd argue that Dynamix's entertaining – if a little fiddly – PC effort was easily the most ambitious.

Published by Activision and released scarcely a year after the film turned Bruce Willis into an action hero, Dynamix's take was of an extremely high standard, boasting impressive Gouraud-shaded polygons, multiple endings and often inventive gameplay.

Starting off in one of the Nakatomi Plaza's many bathrooms, your goal is to rescue your estranged wife and off as many bad guys as you can along the way. Initially you only have access to a small clip of bullets so you'll need to rely on the game's admittedly fiddly combat system, which allows you to do everything from duck and block to throwing vicious (and hilarious looking) roundhouse kicks and punches.

Downed guards can be searched for everything from additional guns and bullets to keys, walkie-talkies and lighters, all of which offer their own uses. The lighter, for example, enables you to access certain grates (complemented with digitised stills from the film) while a walkie-talkie will keep you informed of the guard's positions so you know exactly where they are.

There's also a strict time limit to consider, with a little over 20 minutes given to complete the game. Considering you have to alert the authorities, defeat the bad guys, destroy a helicopter, rescue your wife and send villain Hans Gruber plummeting off the side of the plaza, you quickly realise that every precious second counts and the game starts becoming incredibly tense as a result.

Yes, its combat system is laughable (enemies lunge towards you like extras from *West Side Story*), and the controls take an age to master, but stick with it. Beneath the exterior is an entertaining game, and one that actually does justice to the movie it's based on. *







THE DRIFT KING



IT MADE A BIG IMPACT WHEN IT DRIFTED INTO ARCADES IN 1993, BEFORE MAKING AN EVEN BIGGER ONE A YEAR LATER WHEN IT SHOWED OFF THE IMPRESSIVE POWER OF SONY'S PLAYSTATION. RETRO GAMER LOOKS THROUGH A ROSE-TINTED REAR-VIEW TO REMEMBER THE RACING HISTORY OF RIIIIIIIDGE RACER



Arcade gaming and arcade ports saw something of a renaissance in the Nineties thanks to the arrival of popular coin-ops such as *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat*. Their close relationship went all the way when hardware and software developers began experimenting with comparable arcade and console technology, causing a significant shift to occur as the coin-op and domestic game markets never looking so comparable. Reigniting creativity and imagination as limitations lifted, a raft of popular polygonal 3D games emerged as two of the biggest forces in arcade gaming at the time, Namco and Sega, came to dominate the 3D arcade market, sparking an epic rivalry between the two companies that spilled into our homes.

That shift of battlefield came to put a considerable strain on the coin-op market as the popularity of home gaming increased, thanks largely to Sony's canny marketing and positioning of the PlayStation. When the expected finally happened, and console games began matching and later eclipsing arcade games in visual fidelity, many no longer saw the value or need to play games on vend. Piers and holiday camps, formerly the reserves for high-fidelity gaming, became like gaming cinemas, showing us 'coming soon' titles that, in a few short months, we would be able to play nigh-on arcade-perfect versions of in the comfort of our living rooms. But as this entertaining battle for arcade supremacy raged on, it was a pretty fantastic time to be a gamer – an exciting period filled with great arcade releases and arcade conversions.

A game emblematic of this technical gap-bridging between the two markets was Namco's *Ridge Racer*. A racing game designed for and debuting in arcades, it found a welcome home on the PlayStation when it was flawlessly converted as a launch game for the machine in December 1994.

As detailed in our exclusive making of in issue 52, *Ridge Racer* was a concept brought about by brand new PCB technology that Namco had in development, dubbed Namco System 22, that was able to generate striking texture-mapped polygons. Wanting to showcase the technology, Namco turned to the racing genre, this being a common practice by arcade developers – see Sega's *Hang-On*, *Virtua Racing* and *Daytona USA*, and Namco's own *Pole Position*. Incidentally, this is also the reason why *Ridge Racer* has appeared as a launch game for so many machines since.

"In racing games, you can build a vast space structure; create elaborate, realistic visuals; and process a complex, high-speed program," explains Namco's Masanori Kato. "So, I think this is an appropriate subject to first try out the potential of new hardware. Besides, the rules are simple, and no matter the maker of the game, the operations are the same. I think most people don't need to read the manual to understand that they have to race to the finish line. When you get a new piece of hardware, you want to experience something surprising straight away. Isn't it annoying if you have to read all the manual instructions and tips first? For that reason, when you play *Ridge Racer* on a newly acquired piece of hardware, you can enjoy the surprising experience right away, so I think it is the most appropriate launch title."

The original plan was to create an F1 game using the technology, but this idea was soon dropped in favour of doing something far more accessible, based on a trend that was occurring in Japan's booming car enthusiast scene at the time.

"There was a trend among young people in Japan for tuning their cars," Namco Bandai general manager Yozo Sakagami





» *Ridge Racer Revolution* became a popular sequel not just due to having improved visuals and new modes but also thanks to its two-player link-up games only requiring a single disc to work.



tells us when explaining how the concept behind *Ridge Racer* originated, "and they liked to race on winding mountain roads. They didn't want to slow down when they took corners, so they started drifting their cars and crossing over the boundary line of the road. Of course, this is completely forbidden. At that point, we thought: 'Can we make a racing game in which the driver pushes his driving abilities to the maximum and gets a feeling of extreme speed?' So we created a game in which we let the player experience the sensations of manipulating a car at high speed and mastering corner drift."

While realism took a bit of a back seat, beneath *Ridge Racer*'s colourful exterior, brash J-pop techno beats and videogame liveries roared impressive technical grunt and a keen focus on the thrill of the race. Its signature focus on drifting, which remains a staple in the series, allowed racers to experience the sensation of taking corners at breakneck speed while at the same time giving them the unnerving but equally exhilarating sense of momentarily losing control of their vehicle. Proof that *Ridge Racer* was never intended to be a realistic driving simulator but designed to be a fun and exhilarating racing experience.

It was in April 1994 that work at Namco began on porting *Ridge Racer* to the PlayStation. The two biggest challenges the conversion team faced in porting the game to the machine was how to replicate the 'feel' on the PlayStation's D-pad controller, and also how to alleviate the issue of CD-ROM reading times, with Namco concerned that it would be an issue for console gamers spoiled on immediate cartridge gaming. Aware that it would be unable to fully avoid the latter issue, the team came up with a clever workaround: it would have the majority of the game data recovered at the start of the game, and as this data was being read would entertain users with a playable version of Namco's 1979 classic, *Galaxian*. Furthermore, beating it could unlock new cars in the main game.

Similarly, on the other issue of control, Namco knew that it would have to do the best with the tools Sony had given it, meaning the responsibility to improve the experience of *Ridge Racer* for PlayStation owners was its own. Therefore, shortly after *Ridge Racer*'s launch in Japan, Namco released the neGcon controller. Designed for racing games, it featured two twistable halves connected by a swivel joint that allowed the user to rotate each part for precision steering and drifting in the game. In addition to this, two analogue buttons afforded smooth and gradual control over acceleration and braking. A successor to the controller, the Jogcon, was later packed with special editions of *Ridge Racer Type 4*, offering force feedback and a unique jogging dial to mimic a steering wheel.

The PSone conversion of *Ridge Racer* introduced aspects that would become staples in the series, including mirror mode, a means to eke more from the game's single track by having players race it in reverse; a third-person camera; and additional cars to drive over the two in the arcade game. Garnering huge profits for arcade operators before becoming a popular launch game for the PlayStation, quickly sequels followed, beginning with an arcade sequel, *Ridge Racer 2*, in 1994. More an update of the original arcade game, *Ridge Racer 2* featured no new tracks over the first game but added new aspects such as night driving, a rear-view mirror and, most notably, multiplayer.

"I think racing is an appropriate subject to try out the potential of new hardware"
MASANORI KATO

A proper sequel to *Ridge Racer* came the following year. *Rave Racer* ran on the same hardware as its predecessors but built on the original game brilliantly. Once again, players raced long and short versions of the original track, but this time two new circuits were added. These tracks, City and Mountain, were brilliant additions, with City inviting players to scud along a wide urban overpass embedded in an impressive cityscape, while the challenging Mountain stage could be seen as the opposite: a rural route that snaked through a beautiful rocky vista, decorated with valleys and canyons. *Rave Racer* also marked the first ever appearance of popular *Ridge Racer* race queen Reiko Nagase, though it wouldn't be until the release of *Rage Racer* that the character was officially named.

Considering how great a sequel *Rave Racer* was, it remains a bit of a mystery among fans as to why the game was never ported to the PlayStation. Knowing that a version was mooted and got to tech demo stage for high-performance PCs, we speculate that the reason might lie with technical limitations, but Sakagami puts us straight on the matter.

"Following the first *Ridge Racer*, the objective to convert the games to home consoles during development only came

>> NAMCO ON…
Why it decided to name cars after other Namco arcade games.

Sakagami: It was because of the deep affection of the development team towards Namco games. Most of them played videogames both in their personal and professional life at that time, and these people eventually became attached to *Ridge Racer* when they played it.

>> NAMCO ON…
Whether it was pleased with *Ridge Racer*'s success on the PlayStation.

Sakagami: From the very first *Ridge Racer* until *R4*, they were developed for the PlayStation. During that period, we received the kind support of many players. I think the fact that *Ridge Racer* was a PlayStation launch title contributed a lot as well. At the beginning of the development, there was a time when there was some doubt as to whether any third-party could really develop a game on the PlayStation hardware. Around this time we had a meeting with the software engineering team, and when they showed us the first development build of *Ridge Racer* we felt certain that they really could succeed in making this game work on the PlayStation hardware. I believe that this played a big role, not only with *Ridge Racer*, but also in driving the overall development of games on the PlayStation.





after *Ridge Racer Revolution*. *Rave Racer* had already been developed at that time. This being said, it's not entirely true that *Rave Racer* was never converted to home consoles. In fact, we kept in mind the fact that there is a woman in the opening of *Rave Racer*. This was the introduction of Reiko Nagase. Also, the *Rave Racer* circuits were incorporated in the PSP *Ridge Racer* games, so the game hasn't been released for home consoles as a standalone, but over the course of time, all of its content has found its way into the *Ridge Racer* series."

PlayStation owners really didn't have cause to be too disappointed, though, as the console received its own exclusive sequel that same year. Despite improved visuals, two new vehicles and a couple of new tracks, *Ridge Racer Revolution* stuck close to the original template, particularly in terms of how you progressed through the game. The notable new things that Namco introduced in *Revolution* included two-player link-up races, made better by the fact that you only needed one copy of the game to set up a race, and the chance to adjust the speed level of your car, hinting at the customisation elements that would later be introduced. There are a few quirky aspects too, such as buggy mode and squeaky voiced commentary, and *Galaga '88* also replaced *Galaxian* at the start of the game.

In the same year that *Rage Racer* and *Revolution* were released, a third and pretty peculiar *Ridge Racer* game also came out in Japan. Aimed specifically at children, and seemingly inspired by the buggy mode in *Ridge Racer Revolution*, *Pocket Racer* was yet another reworked version of the original arcade game that featured deformed vehicles shaped like Choro-Q toy cars and simplified steering especially catered towards making the game more accessible.

For the next game in the series, *Rage Racer*, Namco swapped out the inviting, colourful aesthetics for more shiny, burnished and realistic-looking visuals. In keeping with this new sense of professionalism, Namco introduced the first ever career mode into the series too, in which players earned credits through winning races to spend on purchasing new cars and upgrading existing ones. Encompassing five different classes with a secret one unlocked at the end of the game, the career mode was notable for giving players three chances to successfully finish a heat, with failure to place third or higher in three tries clearing you of all the trophies you had earned inside that attempt but still allowing you to keep whatever cash and cars you had accumulated up to that point.

This release was then followed up by *Ridge Racer Type 4* the following year, which continued down that same road. The final *Ridge Racer* game to appear on the PlayStation, *Type 4* kept the

A mini making of Ridge Racer 3D

Retro Gamer: How long did *Ridge Racer 3D* take to create and how big was the team?
Masanori Kato: Concerning the development time, I can't really give an answer. When the staff count was at its highest, over 100 people worked on the development of the game.

RG: What technical difficulties did you need to overcome during development?
MK: People might think that it was originally created with polygons, but when the image output evolved into 3D, we had to reconstruct almost everything. The landscapes and the cars with a complex modellisation, which were sketched wonderfully in 3D until now by the visual designers using their descriptive powers, ended up as a very plain-coloured sketch, so the lights and shadows reflected on the road were badly rendered and felt unnatural. We were very surprised how keenly the human eye recognises the depth feeling or the impression of the materialisation of the 3D objects. We were surprised ourselves by the ability of our own eyes when we first watched the images of the game. From this point on, we reconstructed all the visuals of the game.

RG: How does the 3D add to the experience?
MK: It gives a new visual experience with depth of field and the materialisation of objects. I think some people will be used to the 3D experience with 3D film projections and 3D flat screens, but as an individual, were your eyes attuned to see the deepest three-dimensional perception of the image? The way people see the 3D effect changes greatly from one person to another depending on the eye spacing and their eyesight. With the 3DS, you can adjust the 3D effect to your own eyes so you have the best three-dimensional perception. As a result of this, except of course for the real thing, when you see *Ridge Racer 3D* on 3DS, I think you have a feeling of space, within which you have the impression that the racing cars, the buildings, the guardrail, the mountains and the trees actually exist.

RG: How does *Ridge Racer 3D* differ from other portable *Ridge Racer* games?
MK: The presentation of the game, as you hear it with your ears, as you see it with your eyes, everything has evolved. On top of that, there is a big change in the obstacles to overcome on the road: the 'COM cars' have appeared. They have behaviour that matches what are called 'rival cars'. Sometimes, they block you when you try to overtake, and when you pass them they try to pass you again, so even when you play alone, you drive as if you were racing with opponents. I think you feel the same satisfaction as if you were having a contest with race cars.

RG: How will the 3DS change portable gaming?
MK: The way to understand not only portable gaming, but all gaming devices, might be changing. For example, some people think that if you don't play action games with big screens and hi-fi sound systems, you don't get the full experience and intensity of it. I think that even these people still want to have a look at the 3DS. Of course, even the bigger upper screen of the 3DS is only 3.5 inches, but with the three-dimensional effect, there is now a feeling of depth of field and object materialisation, which will make us start **thinking that the full experience and intensity of a game no longer depends on the size of the screen.**







more realistic tone and look of *Rage Racer*, but was enhanced by featuring gouraud-shaded visuals and an improved Grand Prix mode in which players got to pick a racing team and car manufacturer, and then competed in a series of races with their team, investing in new cars along the way.

Type 4 also had more vehicles than had been seen in any *Ridge Racer* before: an impressive 321, though made up of only 40 or so models. Unlocked fully by finishing every race in every possible combination of qualifying position, team and manufacturer, filling your garage with them all certainly took quite a bit of work, giving far more longevity to *Type 4* than previous instalments. Additionally, *Type 4* was the first in the series to offer split-screen multiplayer and to allow players to fully customise cars, and also broke tradition by introducing an alternative, more realistic, grip type of handling on top of the classic drift controls. Finally, packed with the game was a second disc that contained an enhanced version of the original *Ridge Racer* port. Dubbed *Ridge Racer Hi-Spec Demo* (or *Ridge Racer Turbo*), it was a truncated version of the game that ran at an impressive 60fps – twice the frame rate of the original – and

"Racing Evolution's silly story spirals into a tale of rivalry, subterfuge and girl power"

featured enhanced visuals. It was a fantastic parting gift for PlayStation owners and made a brilliant sequel even more popular with fans.

From 2000 onwards, *Ridge Racer* received a large number of sequels, went portable, and even dipped its toe in realistic driving simulator waters. But before all that, it went multiformat.

Ridge Racer 64 was not only the first *Ridge Racer* game not to appear on a Sony machine, but also the first game in the series not to be developed by Namco, with the development handled by NST, a first-party developer for Nintendo Of America. *Ridge Racer 64* was basically a blend of *Ridge Racer* and *Ridge Racer Revolution*, as it repurposed the tracks in both games. It isn't a complete two-game facsimile, however, as it adds a brand new track, a new career mode and improved driving mechanics by offering a choice of different drift mode options, one of which allowed your car to perform 360-degree spins. Add in the N64's capacity to offer four-player single-screen multiplayer, and *Ridge Racer 64* certainly lived up to the impeccable standards of Namco's entries.

Around the time that development on *Ridge Racer 64* was under way at NST, Namco was busy getting to grips with the soon-to-be-released PlayStation 2, and once again produced a *Ridge Racer* game to coincide with the machine's March 2000 launch in Japan. Like the N64 game, *Ridge Racer V* also played things close to the first two PlayStation games. It saw a return to the uncomplicated arcade origins of the series, and the circuits harked back to the original game, featuring reworked versions of the Novice and Advanced courses in *Ridge Racer*. Given its clear arcade traits, it's logical that Namco would choose to release a coin-op version of the game, and so *Ridge Racer V: Arcade Battle*, currently the last ever *Ridge Racer* arcade game, was released around the same time.

Following *Ridge Racer V*, Namco then produced a *Ridge Racer* spin-off title designed to subtly test how the series would perform as a realistic driving simulator. *R: Racing Evolution*, which was released for the PS2 in 2003 and later ported to the Xbox and GameCube, ignored *Ridge Racer*'s arcade heritage by featuring intricate car customisation options, allowing players to alter myriad settings of each car, from body weight to wheels, and also incorporated a story into the racing. In the game you assume the role of an ambulance driver who, after impressing the head of a shady racing team by speeding an injured racer to the hospital, gets signed up to race for them. The story then gets even sillier, spiralling into a tale of racing rivalry, corporate subterfuge and girl power. It then gets a bit *Thelma & Louise*.

In 2004, the series first went portable with *Ridge Racer DS* and *Ridge Racer* for the PSP. The former was a faithful DS port of *Ridge Racer 64* that made use of the portable's touch-screen controls as a steering method, while the latter was something of a 'best of', featuring tracks from previous PlayStation entries, but, most notably, the City and Mountain stages from *Rave Racer*. It also added in new vehicles, and introduced nitro boosting. A sequel followed in 2006, which kept to the exact same formula, once again featuring enhanced, repurposed tracks from the series but this time adding a few from *Rage Racer*.

Between these two PSP games, though, *Ridge Racer 6* became a launch title for the Xbox 360. As well as online racing, the most notable thing the game added was the slightly more autonomous means of progression. The game's terribly named World Xplorer mode was a gradually unfurling career that allowed you to pick and choose the race you wished to enter, some of which featured differing race criteria such as no boosting, as you unlocked new cars and tracks along the way. An enhanced version of the game later appeared on the PlayStation 3 as *Ridge Racer 7*, featuring many of the same tracks but bringing in more vehicles as well as complete vehicle and bodywork customisation options. It also introduced a global ranking system that allowed players to post and compare their best lap times online. Oh, and it's officially the first ever 3D *Ridge Racer* game, as in 2010 Namco released a 3D update for it.

As fans await the forthcoming *Ridge Racer Unbounded*, they can currently enjoy thundering around the tracks in glasses-free 3D thanks to *Ridge Racer 3D*. Reviewed in this very issue and with more insight about the game found in our mini making of in this feature, *Ridge Racer 3D* once again returns the series to its early arcade and PlayStation roots.

On the subject of *Unbounded*, currently very little is known about the game. What we do know is that it is currently slated for a 2012 release and is being co-developed by Finnish studio Bugbear Entertainment. Famous for the *FlatOut* series of racing games, it seems likely that Namco may be looking to Bugbear to take the series down the destruction-fuelled *Burnout* or *Split/Second: Velocity* route, which not only seems to be en vogue at the moment, but is also how many developers are now approaching arcade racing games. Whatever the plan for the series, though, we can be sure of one thing: *Unbounded* is bound to have some drifting in it.



>> NAMCO ON…

How important is the music to *Ridge Racer* games and how is it chosen?

Hiroshi Okubo: To embody the unrealistic speed and tension of *Ridge Racer* and the use of the latest computer technology, the most suitable music is techno, which gives an impression of energy, the journey and speed. Historically, a lot of early club music was launched that way. Consequently, we inserted the most recent music styles, matching the concept of every title. We made a point of creating an atmosphere the player could be immersed into. In each and every title in the series, we chose a simple keyword or image that we gave to the artists creating the soundtrack. Then each of them would be free to create music filled with a sensation of speed linked to that keyword. Comparing them all, we took the personal touch of each composer and created a *Ridge Racer* sound rich in variety. This time I told them: 'I don't care about the style, but lock down the spirit.'

>> NAMCO ON…

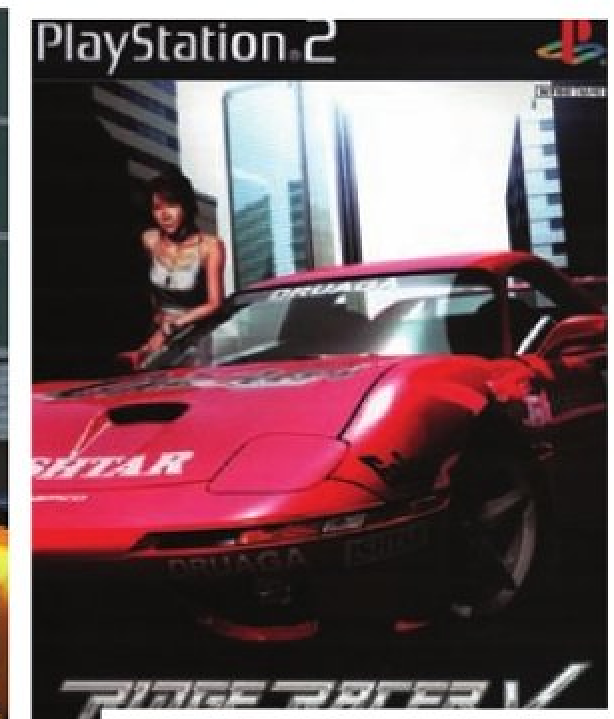
Why *R: Racing Evolution* never received any sequels.

Sakagami: The development of *R: Racing* was challenged by the following limitation: what are we going to do with yet another racing game from Namco when we already had *Ridge Racer*? So it became a game that offered a realistic driving experience, with real cars and real tracks. However, the players who were great supporters of *Ridge Racer* felt uncomfortable with this evolution. This is why we then reaffirmed the origins of what made *Ridge Racer* interesting and developed *Ridge Racer 6* instead of making a sequel to *R: Racing*.



» [PSOne] The *Ridge Racer* series has always been a supporter of reusing and repurposing tracks – it even did so in the games themselves with mirror mode.





» Series race queen Reiko Nagase was dropped for shiny new pit-girl Ai Fukami for *Ridge Racer V*. Ai wasn't popular with fans, and following an online poll Reiko was reinstated.

The games of Ridge Racer

We take a look at all of the Namco games that inspired the racing team names in the original Ridge Racer

RIDGE RACER (ARCADE)

Cyber Sled

Car #9 RT Cyber Sled

Another arcade game that saw early conversion to the PlayStation, *Cyber Sled* was a futuristic vehicular combat game – essentially a polygonal take on games such as *Tank* and *Battlezone* – in which players battled against either computer or human enemies using weaponised hover tanks.

RIDGE RACER (PLAYSTATION)

Solvalou

Car #2 RT Yellow Solvalou

Car #12 RT Blue Solvalou

Xevious fans will be well aware that Solvalou is the name of the ship you pilot in the game, and true fans will know that it is also the title of the third game in the series. Despite its first-person viewpoint and 3D visuals, *Solvalou* sticks surprisingly close to the original 1982 arcade game. The game wasn't a massive hit, though, and so is a rare cab to come by these days.

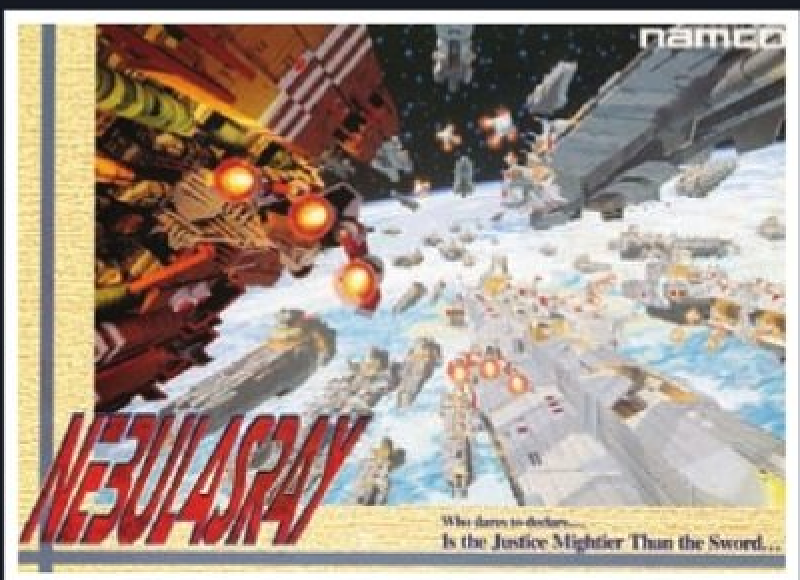
Mappy

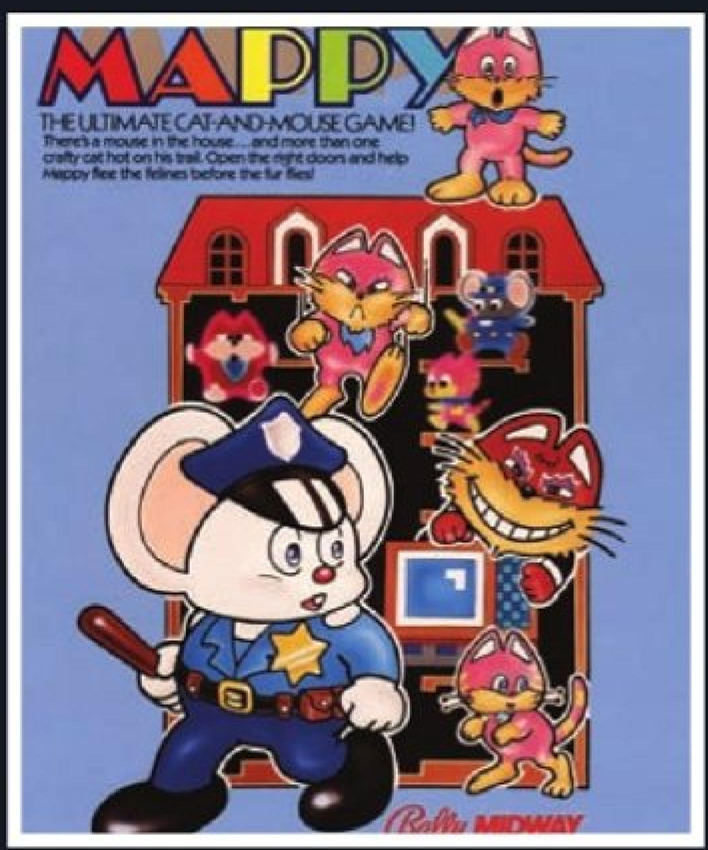
Car #5 RT Blue Mappy

Car#15 RT Pink Mappy

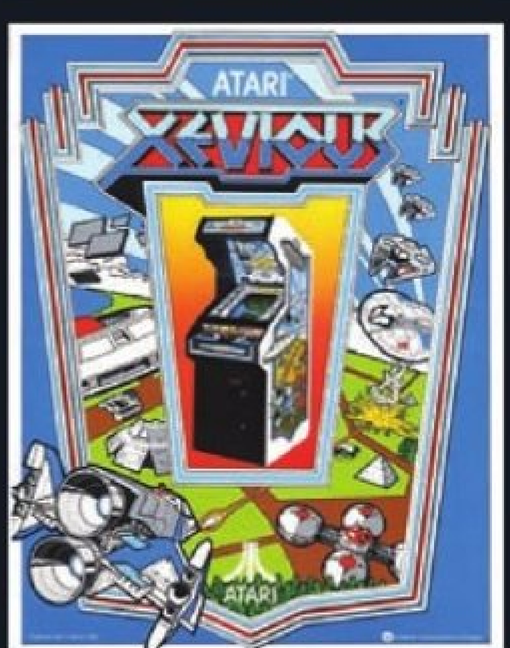
One of Namco's quirkier arcade games, *Mappy* sees you assume the role of a police officer mouse as he tries to retrieve stolen objects that have been hidden around the mansion hideout of a gang of criminal cats. Very likely to have been a game entirely based on that famous idiom, 'a game of cat and mouse'.



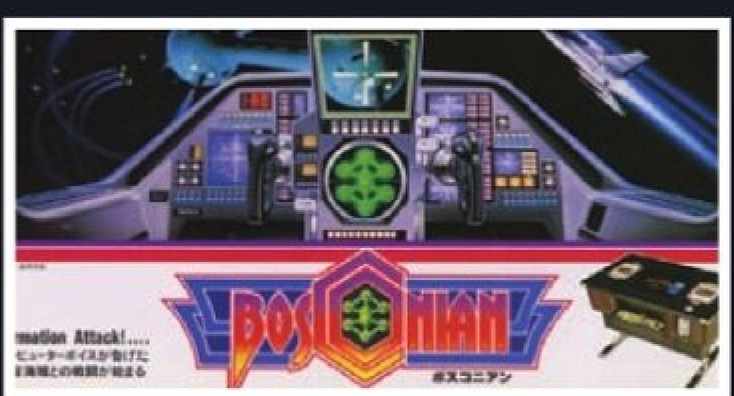












Galaga

Car #6 Galaga RT Carrot

Car #16 Galaga RT Plid's

This very popular sequel to one of the most successful coin-ops ever made, *Galaxian*, is a fantastic and tense vertical shooter that improves on the original game in pretty much all areas. Retaining the same insect alien-blasting as before, *Galaga* adds a number of interesting ideas and features to the mix, such as bonus rounds.

Nebulasray

Car #8 Nebulasray

This little-known top-down shooter was notable for using a distinct ray-tracing technique to generate impressive and realistic-looking 3D frigates and enemy vehicles. Gorgeous to look at, fans of the shooter genre should certainly investigate the game – be warned, however, that it can be a pig to emulate.

Bosconian

Car #18 Bosconian

A game that many have heard of but few have actually played, this eight-way shooter sees you steering a ship and trying to destroy a series of fortified bases that look like watermelons while surviving a co-operative onslaught of alien enemies and space rocks. It's notable for being one of the first arcade games to feature continue screens.

Xevious

Car #7 Xevious Red

Car #17 Xevious Green

Xevious is one of the earliest ever examples of the vertical shooter. It was also famed for its lush, vibrant-looking graphics and clever enemy AI, which allowed the game to be challenging without the need to fill the screen with enemies. In fact, the game is such a classic that it received two mentions in *Ridge Racer*, via *Solvalou*.

The Making Of …



With his games rivalling Ultimate in quality, looks and imagination, programmer Stephen Crow became a legend by politely playing the revered developer at its own game. Stuart Hunt chats to Stephen about his Spectrum classic Starquake, finds out how he managed to squeeze so much power from the Spectrum, and discovers the full story behind his game's unfinished sequel

Dropzone **borrowed elements off** ***Defender; Namtir Raiders*** **was essentially** ***Space Invaders; Tehkan World Cup*** **was to thank for bringing** ***Sensible Soccer*** **into our lives. It's a classic tale that has been heard many times in these pages. In the same way that a musician might be inspired by their favourite guitarist, or an athlete by a gold medallist, many programmers would teach themselves to code by looking to the games they enjoyed playing and that had often turned them onto gaming in the first place to inform their work – replicating, cloning and building off these games to hone and cultivate their own skills and creativity. And so, seeing Ultimate games as the pinnacle of Spectrum gaming, Stephen Crow became greatly influenced by the Leicestershire developer.**

Stephen's first Ultimate-inspired game was the top-down maze shooter *Wizard's Lair*, a game he designed by combining ideas taken from *Atic Atac* and *Sabre Wulf* – though amazingly, when you consider how similar both games look, Stephen never actually owned the former. After finishing *Wizard's Lair*, he was left to find a publisher for his game and a new project to get stuck into next. After turning down an offer from Thorn EMI, Stephen decided to go with Bubble Bus Software, which had just started up in his hometown of Tonbridge. It was also around this time that he spotted a brand new Spectrum game from Ultimate in a magazine.

"I saw a picture of *Underwurlde* and thought it would be cool to work on a huge side-on map game next," Stephen explains. "It seemed to open up a lot more gameplay possibilities, And that's basically what inspired me to do *Starquake*. I saw one picture of *Underwurlde* in a magazine and

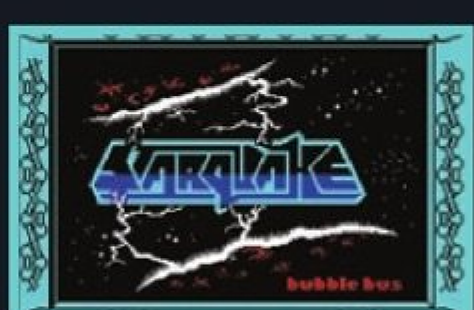


» [Spectrum] Steve on the Olly the octopus sprite in the game: "Olly was simply a cartoon character I used to draw at school. Once I stuck a large picture of Olly up during a maths exam and got a detention for it."

"If I ever did write another videogame, it would certainly be Starquake 2"



» [Spectrum] The easiest way to get around is to use these hover pads. However, getting BLOB off them could be difficult.



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** BUBBLE BUS SOFTWARE
» **DEVELOPER:** STEPHEN CROW
» **RELEASED:** 1985
» **GENRE:** PLATFORM



wanted to do something similar, but I wanted to set it in space and for it to involve technology. I never owned *Underwurlde*. I don't even think I ever played the game; I just sort of understood what the premise of the game was and worked from there, from seeing a screenshot."

Like *Wizard's Lair*, *Starquake* had a second Ultimate influence – albeit one that was pretty well concealed. "I am not sure anyone ever picked up on this, but the inspiration for BLOB came from the *Lunar Jetman* cartoon in *Crash* magazine at the time," Stephen reveals. "I just loved *Crash* magazine. Before I even got a review in the magazine of any of my games I would read *Crash* every month. It seemed like the people at the magazine had a really good sense of humour. Well, I remember reading the *Lunar Jetman* cartoon each month, and seeing this little robot guy who was a background character. It wasn't even a sidekick – sometimes the artist just drew that little robot guy and it was a real minor part of the story. I thought I'd try a character based on him and see what it looked like. It looked really goofy and I wanted the main character to have a goofy, humorous feel. Also, a sphere was an ideal shape for a character to show rotation as it turned from left to right."

Taking inspiration from the little bug-eyed droid that occasionally appeared in the panels of John Richardson's popular comic strip, *Starquake* started life with a central hero from the outset. BLOB (Bio-Logical Operated Being), as Stephen christened him, was the very first element of *Starquake* to be designed and created. As a result, BLOB informed nearly all of the gameplay and design choices in the game.

"I remember just having a straight platform at the bottom of the screen, and I had BLOB. I animated him rotating and then his legs moving, and him rotating and walking back and forward, and just kept on playing with that until it felt right," explains Stephen. "After that I started coming up with other abilities he could do. The next thing I did was to get him to go into the elevators, going into them and how he came out the elevators and getting that feeling right. So I built a basic elevator route, where BLOB would walk in, get drawn up the elevator and then jump out. Then I worked on the gravity and how fast he'd fall, repeatedly running back and forwards, going up the elevator, jumping out of the top, watching him fall, and kept tweaking the numbers until it all felt smooth. All the other things, such as the zapping rays and the teleports and the jet pads, I just kept adding and adding."

Stephen built his *Starquake* construction set over the course of a few months and used it to test and hone BLOB's abilities and the various game mechanics until he was satisfied with how everything in the game felt. By the time he had included all the features that he wanted in the game – a process of around six months – his testing ground had swelled to around 16 screens, and BLOB was able to generate and make use of his own platforms, was trained in the art of using elevators and teleportation, and could even hop onto rocket pads and fly around the playing field.

This methodical approach to *Starquake*'s design, which Stephen had first applied to *Wizard's Lair*, would prove immensely beneficial later on in the game's development. Once all of the aspects of the game



» [Spectrum] Given that the planet is a bit rickety, it kind of makes sense for a large portion of it to be made from molecules.



» Stephen at Blizzard Entertainment.

» Steve says the fallen spaceman was included to create interest: "Maybe BLOB was not the only one in the spacecraft when it crash landed. I always loved the movie *Silent Running* when I was little – maybe this fallen astronaut was BLOB's master?"





» [Spectrum] *Crash* called it one of the best Spectrum games.

had been tested and had been proven to work inside the confines of the construction set, expanding it out into a huge map was a time-consuming but relatively simple task.

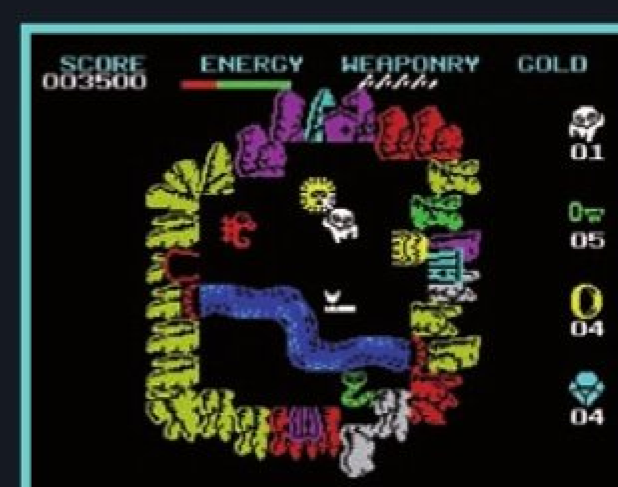
"I created the whole world in about four to six weeks – it wasn't long. I set myself a target of 20 screens a day and that's all I focused on. I knew at that point that all the gameplay worked and so, when I was creating it, all I was doing was putting the gameplay elements into different combinations to make it fun for players. For the look of the world I came up with things like chemistry models, as I wanted to make it look as if the planet was made up of molecules, and also incorporated rocks and weird-looking plants. I just drew inspiration from lots of different things. Because it was an alien world I was basically free to do whatever I wanted, which is kind of the nice thing about sci-fi."

By the time Stephen had moved on to *Starquake*, he had become far more proficient at programming on the Spectrum. Learning how to program with his earlier games, *Laser Snaker* and *Factory Breakout*, then perfecting his skills with *Wizard's Lair*, when he came to write *Starquake* Stephen found that he had much more time to concentrate on the gameplay and also better understood the inner workings of the Spectrum and how to get the best from it.

"To create the game I used a Tatung Einstein computer linked to a ZX Spectrum via a custom high-speed RS232 cable. I would write and assemble the program code on the Einstein and then download it to test on the ZX Spectrum via the link. The Spectrum hardware was very basic and didn't have anything like hardware sprites. The C64 had hardware sprites. I can't remember if the Amstrad did but the Spectrum did not, and so with the Spectrum everything had to be done by your own program; it had to remove all the pixels of the sprite and then move it to the new position and then redraw every pixel back onto the screen. That took a lot of time. The sprite routine alone would probably take up a third of all the processing power while the game was running, and that routine was so important that I must have rewritten my sprite-drawing program a dozen times. I'm not joking – you would go through and think of another way. Actually, every machine code instruction took up several T states [time states] and I had a book that told me which instruction took how many. Some would take up four time states on the Spectrum – that was the shortest instruction – while others could take up to 16, so for every line of code I looked at how many time states it used and tried to figure out ways of writing the sprite-drawing routine so it would take less time states and thus be able to draw more sprites or draw them quicker."

Stephen knew that for an ambitious game like *Starquake* to work and be a success its world had to animate smoothly. To achieve this he locked the game's frame rate to always run at 50 frames per second. This basically meant everything in the game – the sprites, game logic, keyboard commands and music – would refresh in a single frame, 50 times every second.

"A lot of games at the time were running at 25 frames per second and it just didn't give you the same feel, I felt. It just didn't feel as smooth," says Stephen. "At the time Ultimate games were the benchmark of quality and smoothness, and I felt any game I created had to at least measure up to that. What is interesting is the way that those old-fashioned tube



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WIZARD'S LAIR (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: SPECTRUM, CPC, C64
YEAR: 1985

EARTHWORM JIM
SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE, SUPER NINTENDO, GAME BOY, SMS, GAME GEAR, PC
YEAR: 1994

WORLD OF WARCRAFT (THE BURNING CRUSADE, WRATH OF THE LICH KING AND CATACLYSM)
SYSTEM: PC, MAC
YEAR: 2004-2010

THE KIDS WERE ALL RIGHT

SCORING AN ASTONISHING 96% in *Crash* magazine, their review of *Starquake* was decorated with impressed comments like: "Though the game is very Ultimate-esque, you soon find that things are a lot more professional, taking the route that ACG should have gone presentation-wise."

As a fan of both *Crash* magazine and Ultimate, for Stephen such praise must have been like winning the lottery twice. Well, this wasn't the first bit of encouraging feedback that he received about the game – Stephen, it seems, was something of a neighbourhood Doc Brown.

"I was 20 at the time I wrote *Starquake* and kids a few doors down from me all had Spectrums and they were always asking me how *Starquake* was coming along. So I told them when I finished it I would give them a copy of the game. A few days after I finished it, I gave them a copy and they were the first people to ever play it – this was a month before it came out in the shops – and the feedback I got from them was that they loved the game. It was at this point I thought *Starquake* could be a really good game. So that was interesting, getting that first feedback from those kids down the street."



» [Spectrum] The world of *Starquake* still looks wonderfully vibrant, even today.



» [Spectrum] The planet's inhabitants aren't very appreciative of BLOB's efforts to save them all.



"I never owned Underwurlde. I don't even think I ever played the game"

televisions worked, as it would start drawing the picture from the top, and draw every horizontal line all the way to the bottom. And above the top of the screen there was something called a VBLANK area, where it started the frame but nothing started drawing yet – I believe they used it for things like Ceefax. Anyway, how I programmed *Starquake* was as soon as that frame started, before the television had even started drawing the top line of the display, I drew all of the sprites first so that before the television had gotten to drawing halfway down the picture the sprites were removed and redrawn. That meant nothing ever shimmered or flickered. If you hadn't redrawn the sprites before the time the television had gotten to that sprite, it wouldn't appear right. It would flicker because it was getting erased and redrawn as the television scanned across it."

A common bane for many Spectrum programmers was its poor colouring-in skills. The machine was hamstrung by a limited colour palette, and when several moving colours shared screen space it often caused sprites to clash like bad-tempered Eighties sportswear. So how did Stephen succeed in making *Starquake* look so colourful and get multiple colours to behave so well on the machine?

"What I did is every time I designed the graphics or any of the stationary graphics – the things that don't move on screen – I thought about how the colour was going to work. Basically, you could only have a single background colour and a foreground colour in any 8x8 square. The colour resolution on the Spectrum was far lower than the actual pixel resolution, so all the stationary graphics were very carefully designed around this limitation so that I could make things look colourful but not get those awful blocky squares of colour that you saw in some games. With all the moving sprites, as you can't control when a green alien moves in front of, say, a yellow alien, you had to think about which one would take precedence, and there wasn't really any good way of doing that. I think I always gave the precedence to BLOB so that he always stayed white, even when something was on top of him. There were some things you could get around and other things you just couldn't."



» [Spectrum] BLOB uses these to be warped around the world.

Worse than the colour issue, though, was the sound. The Spectrum didn't have any hardware sound at all, and this made writing music on it a convoluted process. Instead of a sound chip, the Spectrum had a speaker that could be positioned in either an in or out arrangement to create different sounds. It was primitive, but Stephen, once again, found a way to get the best out of it.

"By that time I had a Yamaha keyboard and would try to compose all of the music on that and then try to program it into the actual game. I just started coming up with melodies that sounded pretty good, and if I came up with a tune that sounded good I would use that. One trick I did use with the music is because the Spectrum speaker could only move in or out, basically what that creates is something called a square wave, and so the Spectrum had a very

CONVERSION QUAKERS

CONFIDENT THAT THE game would be a hit, Bubble Bus converted *Starquake* to a large number of systems, including the PC, MSX and even Atari 8-bit computers. Stephen tells us what his involvement was in the various ports that the company released.

"I was very much involved on a day-to-day basis at Bubble Bus. I would definitely go in there at least once a week and check and make sure that the feel of the game was right, and talk to the programmers and look at the code.

"I can't remember if I did the graphics for the C64 version but I definitely did the sound for that one, which was an absolute joy because you had a real synthesizer. It was still a challenge, though, because I had to sort of emulate that very specific Spectrum sound on the C64, and so I remember having to come up with a program for the machine that could emulate some of the sounds on the Spectrum."





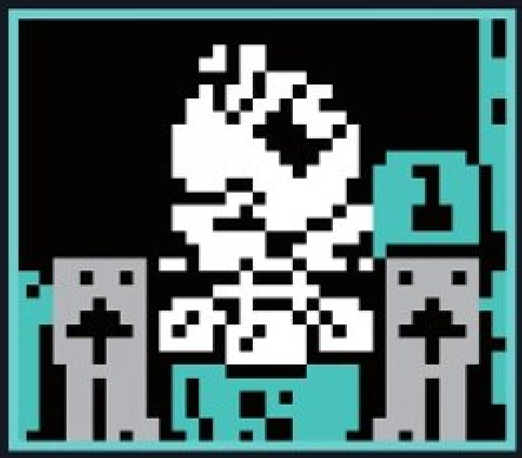


» [Spectrum] To partially solve the problem of colour clash, Stephen always gave precedence to the BLOB sprite in the game.

POPULAR MECHANICS FOR KIDS

Stephen reveals the thinking behind some of *Starquake*'s many innovative gameplay mechanics.

BLOB UTILISING ROCKET PADS
"Pretty standard feature, but I didn't want to give BLOB the 'Superman' ability throughout the whole game, so the rocket pads were limited for travel between launch sites only. Also, with a rocket pad BLOB became bigger and thus could not fit through small spaces, which further limited where you could go with a rocket pad."



BLOB'S ABILITY TO GENERATE PLATFORMS
"I don't know where I got the idea but the concept of having a platform that would dissolve after a few seconds worked really well and added a puzzle element to the game."



CHEOPS PYRAMIDS
"My friend Justin Whittaker, who programmed games for Atari for a time, built a replica Cheops pyramid, which apparently had crazy properties such as preserving food – or mummies. I thought I would incorporate them into the game because they were probably from another planet!"





» [Spectrum] Stephen thoughtfully included teleportation terminals to make getting around the huge world much easier.



» *Crash*'s *Lunar Jetman* comic provided the inspiration for BLOB.

> "Stephen was in the middle of a bidding war as he considered which publisher to go with"

particular sound to it – it was sort of harsh. A note is the distance between the peak of one wave to the peak of the next, so I used a technique called pulse width modulation, and what that did is even though the point from the speaker being out to being out again would be the same difference, I would vary how much time the speaker would be in, so sometimes the speaker would be out for just a short period of time, then I would move it back in again and hold that for a long time, and then during the course of the note I would change it to have the speaker being out for a longer time and only in for a short time. So it would still play the same note but it kind of gave it this chorus-like tone – some people thought it was even playing two notes at the same time, but it actually wasn't. It gave the tone of the music a sort of nice synthesised sound that was much more interesting than the regular Spectrum sound."

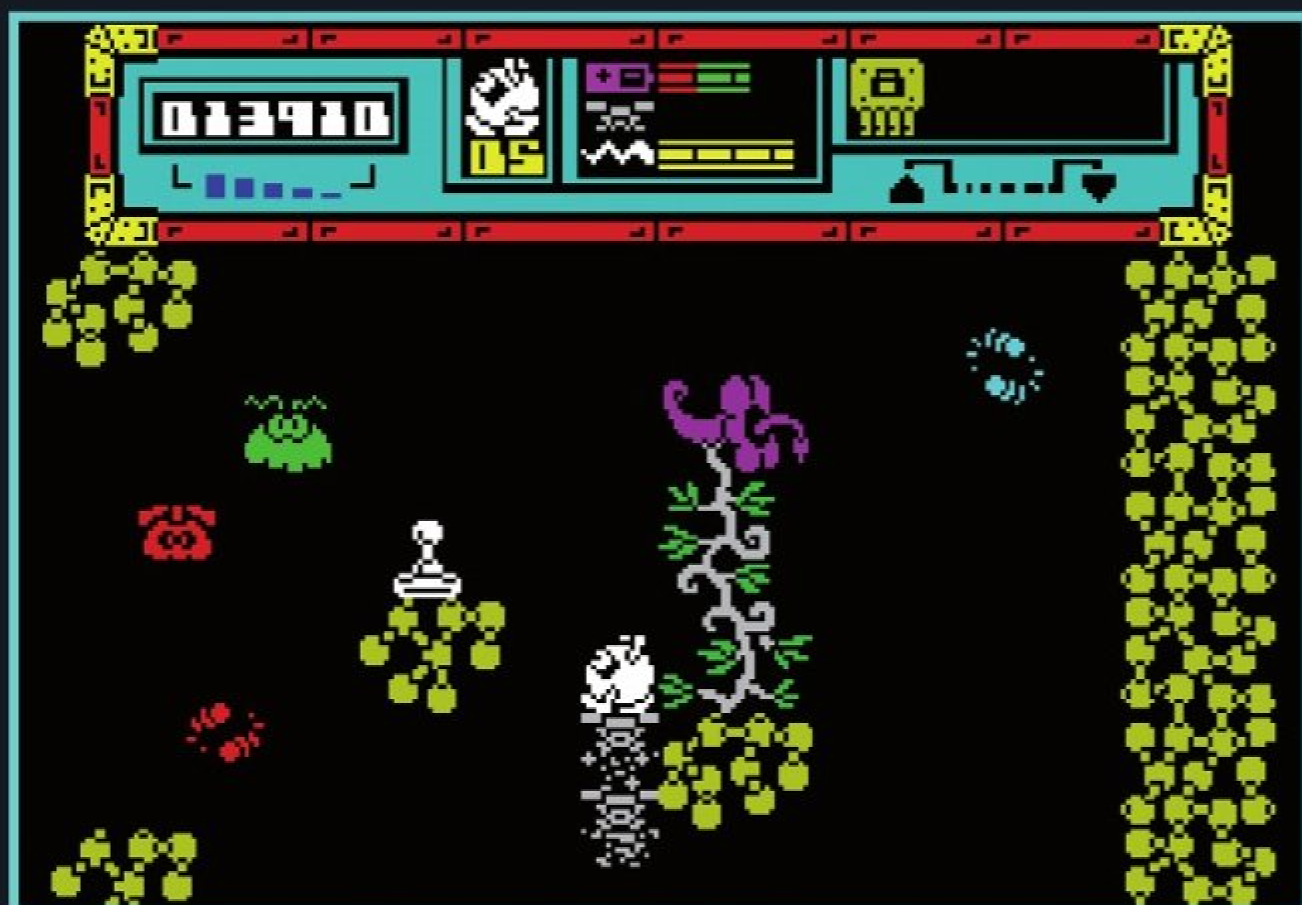
The success of *Wizard's Lair* before it meant Stephen had no problem finding a publisher for *Starquake*. In fact, two companies showed enthusiastic interest in publishing the game: Bubble Bus Software, which had previously published *Wizard's Lair*, and Hewson Consultants. Stephen was in the middle of a bidding war as he considered which company to go with.

"It was interesting because Hewson had a lot of money and I'd never worked with them before, and Bubble Bus didn't have a lot of money but they had a lot of heart. In the end I think Hewson offered me something like four times more money than Bubble Bus were offering, but I decided to go with Bubble Bus because they were just so passionate about trying to make the game work and sell as many copies as possible. And I think they did a pretty good job with the game, but I also think they made some pretty poor choices. I think all of the *Starquake* adverts came out in black and white while another game they published a few months later – which wasn't anywhere near as good, I felt – they used full colour ads for. I just thought, 'Well, why did you do that when you didn't for *Starquake*?' In the end I didn't fall out with Bubble Bus but I did think they were making some poor choices, and that's what made me go with Hewson for *Firelord*. But the good thing about Bubble Bus was they converted *Starquake* to just about every platform at the time, so it got out there to a lot of different machines, which was good."

Firelord was Stephen's first game for Hewson and also the final one that he would do all of the programming and graphics for. Well, his final finished game anyway, as shortly after wrapping up work on *Firelord* he began writing a sequel to *Starquake*, incorporating many of the ideas and features into the game that he was unable to include in the original.



» [Spectrum] *Starquake* featured a wide range of objects and devices for players to experiment with.



» [Spectrum] BLOB might be small but he was certainly a versatile hero, able to generate and make use of his own platforms.



» [Spectrum] With Elite Systems having released the original on the iPad recently, perhaps BLOB has found his new home.

"Basically you were very limited with the amount of memory on the Spectrum, so you had to really pick and choose. Some of the features I wanted to have were to have BLOB roll up into a ball and roll down things, which we eventually saw in *Sonic The Hedgehog*, and a pinball sort of thing where you'd fall onto a spring pad and bounce off it – things like that. I just wasn't able to do those things because of time constraints. I basically had to get the game done in time for Christmas, and also the limitations on the amount of things you could put into one game. When I started work on *Starquake 2* I started playing around with some of those features. Another thing I worked on for the sequel was a tube that BLOB could run into and it sort of acted like a cannon, so you could run into this pipe and, when you were inside, it would shoot you out. So these would be around the level and that was going to be a new part of the gameplay, but I never finished working on *Starquake 2*. I only got about three months in and then abandoned it."

So why was the game abandoned? "I think I was a bit burned out after writing *Firelord*. I was under a lot of pressure to finish it before Christmas. Back then you kind of worked on your own; you were in your own little isolated bubble. What happened was I started working on *Starquake 2*, and I was making progress; I built the sandbox of the new features and things BLOB could do, and that was all going pretty good, but I just wanted to take a break for a bit, and I think it was Andrew [Hewson] who suggested I spend a couple of months doing some graphics on another game, and that sounded like fun. I enjoyed it so much that I just kept on doing that, and took on more and more work doing graphics for other games and never got back to programming *Starquake 2*."

Though that long-term break from programming harmed any chance of *Starquake* receiving a sequel, changing focus to work on graphics certainly didn't harm Stephen's career. His artistic talents saw him relocate to California to work on a number of big and original titles, including *Earthworm Jim* for Shiny Entertainment and *Skullmonkeys* for claymation game studio The Neverhood. Still living in California today, Stephen now works for Blizzard Entertainment, where his work is viewed daily by millions in the massive online universe of *World Of Warcraft*.

Of all the titles Stephen has worked on over the years, though, *Starquake* remains his favourite. In fact, such is his fondness for the game that he doesn't rule out the possibility of one day revisiting the series again, picking up where he left off at Hewson all those years ago and resurrecting that *Starquake* sequel he sadly never got the chance to finish.

"If I ever did write another videogame it would certainly be *Starquake 2*," Stephen confirms. "I have a friend, Nick Jones, who I worked with on *Earthworm Jim*. He's actually working on a little pet project right now, so I was thinking of maybe doing something like that with him, but in a couple of years' time when I've got a bit more time on my hands. Doing something like that with him – he would do the programming, I could do all of the graphics, and we could design it together – I think would be a really fun project to do. If I won the lottery tomorrow and didn't have to work, that's what I would do."



» [Spectrum] Your mission is to help BLOB retrieve the parts needed to stop the planet from imploding and destroying the whole universe. No pressure, then…



» [Spectrum] The elevators in *Starquake* were an idea taken from Stephen's earlier game, *Factory Breakout*.

Mapped!



#03. Starquake

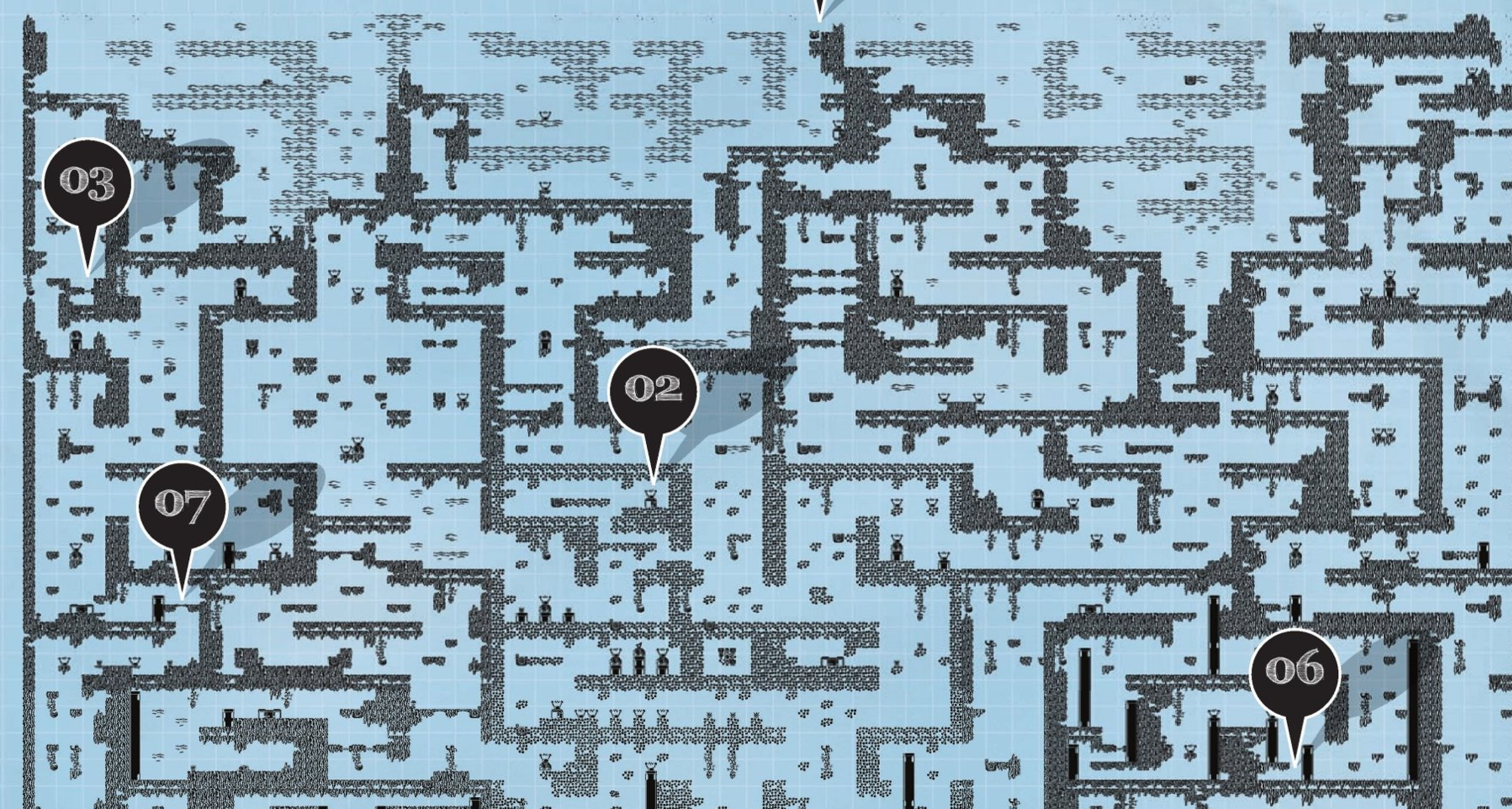
Stephen Crow's epic Spectrum adventure is no small game, even by modern standards. See for yourself…

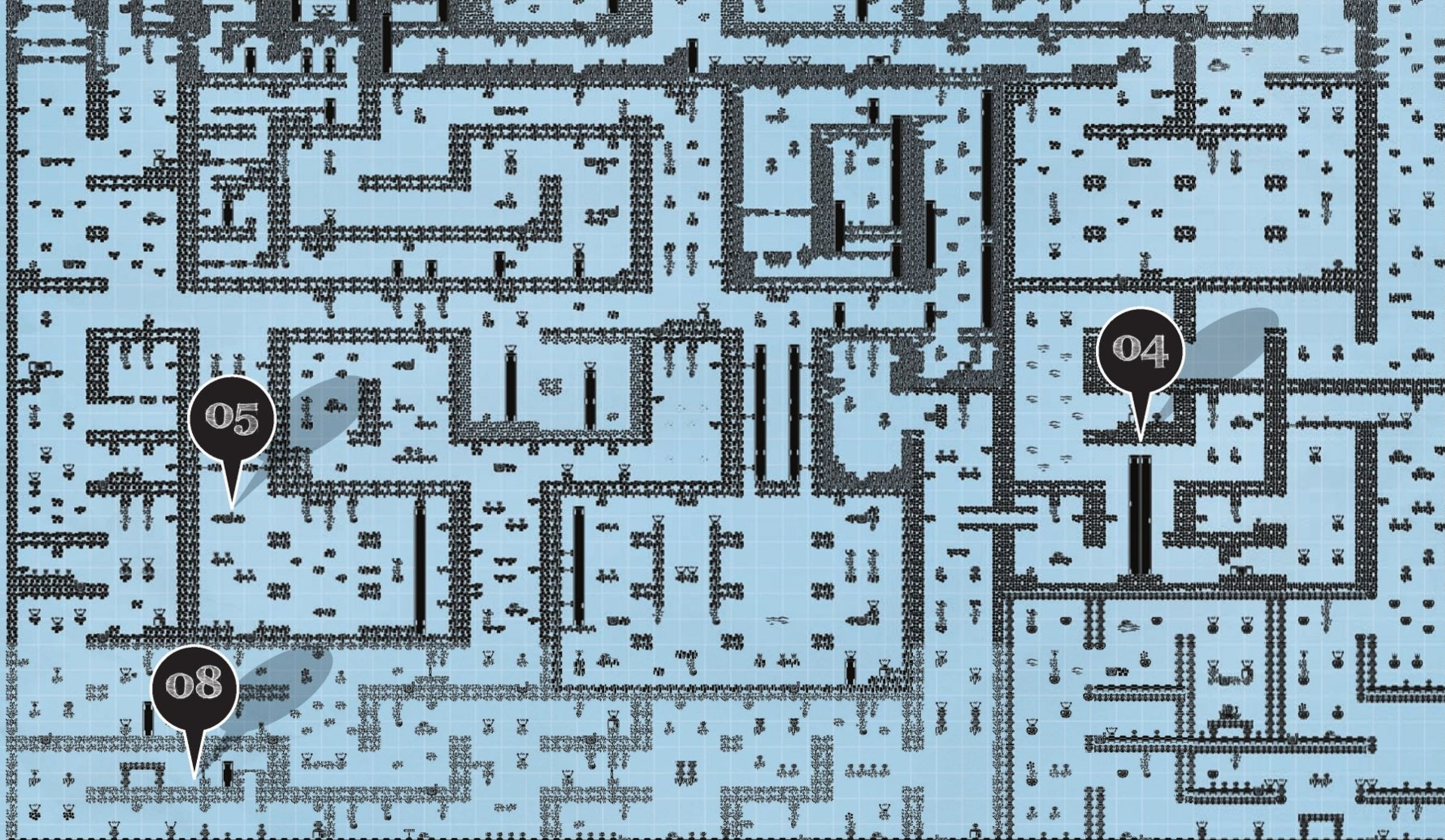
What Starquake means to me



"I haven't played *Starquake* in years, but I can still feel my fingers on those buttons and the way BLOB moves around the screen, and it sort of gives me a really good feeling inside. It's definitely very important to have the right feel in the game for me, and that's what makes *Starquake* really special. The sounds, the way BLOB moves, everything. In my whole career I've probably worked on 30 games, and there's less than a handful that I've really enjoyed playing after I finished it. Definitely *Starquake* I loved playing. I played it over and over again when I finished it."

Stephen Crow, creator of Starquake





Legend:

01 BLOB He's a handy little chap who can build bridges to reach higher areas and has a laser for destroying enemies. He's a little weak so you'll need to find power-ups to boost his energy.

02 Teleporters You'll find a number of these around the landscape. They're a great way of traversing the playing world, but you will need to discover the code in order to access each teleporter.

03 Electrons These devices let off random charges of electricity. It's possible to slip by them, but you'll often need spot-on reflexes and the window of opportunity is quite short.

04 Anti-Gravity Lifts These one-way systems typically head upwards. They're another quick way of traversing the massive game world. Simply press up when inside one.

05 Transporter Hoppers BLOB only has tiny feet, so he gets tired on long excursions. Fortunately, these hoppers are fast, mobile units that enable him to soar around with ease.

06 Secret Passage Certain areas of the game feature tiny gaps between caverns that give BLOB immediate access to other areas. Very sneaky, but very useful if you know where they are.

07 Smash Traps No one likes nasty surprises, so you'll find these smash traps immensely annoying. Stand on top of them and they'll disintegrate, potentially putting you in danger.

08 Gates Some of the most annoying obstacles. These are the gates that occasionally guard the precious cores you need to collect. You'll need to find the relevant item to unlock them.

Codes Found:

SONIQ
ULTRA
DELTA

These don't seem to work on my mates C64 version though. Weird.

Special thanks to reader Arttu Ylärakkola for allowing us to use his awesome map. Check out solvalou.com for more examples

THE CLASSIC GAME

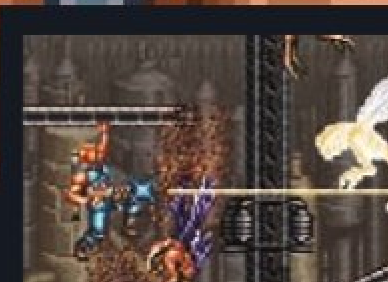


It's without doubt one of the greatest Super Nintendo games of all time, one of the best games in the *Contra* series, and also one of the finest run-and-gun games ever. Oh, and did we mention that it's one of the best games ever too? That it's taken us 89 issues to finally give *Contra III* a classic game analysis is somewhat strange, but the reason lies in the fact that the game is so exceptional that we just assumed we already had. A masterclass in game pacing, set pieces and basically just great level design, from the very minute you start *Contra III* to the sweaty, jubilation-filled second you finally beat it on the hardest setting and see the game's ending, the action is relentless, the challenge high and the gameplay intense. The year is 2636, and Stuart Hunt is helping two commandos, Sully and Jimbo, win an epic alien war.

THE ARMOURY



Machine gun
The default weapon in the game. It's pretty powerful and really quite effective at taking out much that the game throws at you.



Laser
As laser-based weapons do, this fires a concentrated line of powerful radiation. It's highly powerful, but using it requires a good aim.



Spread gun
Though the weakest weapon in the game, the spread gun makes short work of enemies attacking from different heights.



Crush missiles
Blue in colour, these are the most powerful weapons in the game. They explode on contact, and are really effective against bosses.



Flamethrower
The flamethrower is an effective close-quarters combat tool that is great for taking down bosses and cindering weak spots.



Homing missiles
Moderately powerful homing missiles will hunt enemies down. It's a really effective weapon against the airborne aliens.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IT'S A CLASSIC



Contra just got better

The original *Contra* reinvented the run-and-gun genre, introducing many elements that countless games adopted. The follow-ups prior to *Contra III* offered a decent helping of action, but they didn't measure up to the original. *Contra III*, however, marked a giant leap forward. It was everything you would expect from a *Contra* game, but with bigger weapons, bigger explosions, bigger bosses, a new post-apocalyptic setting and a motorcycle level. Set piece after set piece, the game was a tour de force of imagination, deft level design and special effects that hasn't aged a single day.

BEST LEVEL



Start as you mean to end

With so many memorable moments in *Contra III*, picking just one was impossible. As the opening stage is a great example of how to grab a teenager's attention and make them part with birthday money, we had to mention it. Within the first few minutes you're gunning down aliens and mutant dogs, hopping into a tank to flatten foes, sampling nearly all of the weapons in the game, dodging a plane as it bombs the city, jumping through the flaming ruins while taking out a wave of winged aliens and finally facing off against a giant, bullet-spewing alien tortoise. It's one of the best opening levels of any videogame.



BEST WEAPON



Smart bomb

Many fans will have their favourite weapon. Some love the laser. Others will like the weaker but lovely spread gun, as it makes killing foes an absolute breeze. There are others who will like the flamethrower, as it's great for when you get up close. Therefore, picking a best weapon is a bit of a thankless endeavour, and one we chickened out of by virtue of us going with the smart bomb. It might look like a metal turnip, but release it into the game's atmosphere and see the screen turn hazy, killing grunts with ease and knocking a large chunk off the energy of the game's bosses.

BEST BOSS



The massive Terminator

There really was only one boss we could highlight here. And typical of memorable 16-bit bosses, it is something that didn't exactly err on the side of caution as far as copyright was concerned. The giant T-800-alike that rips through the level's wall at the end of the third stage is a tricky one. First, you see his claws pierce the wall, pulling it apart as if it was made of tinfoil, before seeing his beaming red eyes glowing in the darkness. The beast then emerges, firing lasers from its eyes, lobbing bombs into the playing field and breathing fire too. The only thing it doesn't do is ride a motorcycle and shoot up a police station.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** SUPER NINTENDO
- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

What the press said… ages ago

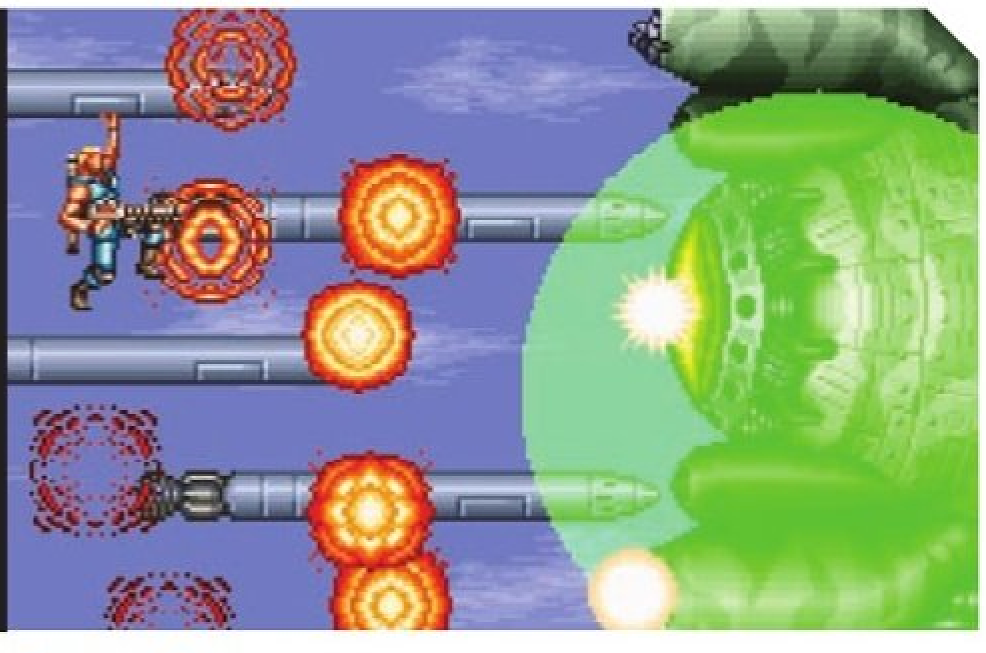


Mean Machines 95%
Anyone who doubts the abilities of the Super NES should take a look at this – it's unbelievable! The graphics, sounds, special effects and varied, highly addictive gameplay are all absolutely outstanding.

What we think

Standing alongside *Gunstar Heroes* and *Metal Slug*, *Contra III* is the pinnacle of run-and-gun gaming, and has still yet to be bettered. It's an outstanding game.

ANOTHER BEST LEVEL



Motorcycle

Given that there are so many great action set pieces in *Contra III*, we had to give a mention to another of its fantastic levels. The motorcycle stage deserves a look in, as it's basically just one giant action set piece. The stage begins with the player astride a 2636 era Ducati, blasting flying aliens before a giant frigate appears, its undercarriage primed with heavy ordnance. Survive this vicious gauntlet and the ship takes to the air, you chasing after it. This leads on to the most insane bit in the entire game: blasting the ship's glowing arse while hopping between missiles being fired at it.

BEST USE OF MODE 7



Arachnophobia

From the map in *A Link To The Past* to pseudo-3D like *F-Zero* and *Pilotwings*, the cream of early Super Nintendo games used the console's Mode 7 technique to show off the power of the console, and *Contra III* was no different, proving a great showcase of the versatility of the effect. It was used to create dazzling explosions, two top-down levels, and also several bosses. The first Mode 7 boss is a large robotic spider that scuttles along the floor before jumping into the air, scaling bigger and filling the screen before disappearing, and then making a quick descent in a bid to crush Sully and Jimbo.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Brøderbund

From humble family origins to one of the biggest US software publishers of the last few decades, Mike Bevan traces the history of the company that brought us Lode Runner, Prince Of Persia and Myst

As the videogames industry neared its second decade, the console phenomenon that birthed the likes of Atari and Activision began to face increasing competition from another revolution in the making: home computers. The opportunity for dedicated hobbyists to create and publish their own software on inexpensive floppy disk or cassette became a reality, and anyone with the ambition, enthusiasm and a little know-how now had the chance to consider a career in the games business.

This was a notion that occurred to Doug Carlston, a Harvard-qualified lawyer who had been fascinated by computers since the Sixties. After graduation, he had secured a position with a prestigious law firm in Chicago, based in the city's famous Sears Tower, before moving to Maine to set up his own practice with a colleague. During his college years, a part-time job at Harvard's computer lab had introduced him to the joys of rudimentary programming, and adverts for the new generation of home computers showing up in popular magazines at the time intrigued him. He decided that the $400 to purchase a TRS-80, officially to help run his law office but off the record as something "to play around with" in his leisure time, might be a good investment.

Doug soon began to find coding addictive, especially without the long turnaround times of the mainframe systems he had experienced previously. Alongside a bunch of tax applications for the office, he started cranking out games as a means to hone his skills, the first of which was a space-themed strategy game called *Galactic Empire*. After contacting three software houses, he shrewdly struck non-exclusive publishing deals with all of them, one being Scott Adams International. *Galactic Empire* became the first non-adventure game the company ever released.

INSTANT EXPERT

Brøderbund was founded in 1980, as a part-time project for brothers Doug and Gary Carlston to distribute Doug's TRS-80 *Galactic Saga* games. The company grew into one of the major US games publishers, turning over around $300 million in annual sales at its peak.

Originally based in a rented house in Eugene, Oregon, the company relocated to San Rafael, California, in 1981, where it remained for the next ten years.

Brøderbund launched the careers of several notable designers including Dan Gorlin (*Choplifter*), Jordan Mechner (*Kareteka*, *Prince Of Persia*) and Will Wright (*Raid On Bungeling Bay*).

The company's well-regarded back catalogue includes other classic titles like *Lode Runner*, *Spelunker*, *The Castles Of Dr Creep*, *The Last Express* and *Myst*.

Unlike publishers such as Atari, Brøderbund promoted its programmers on packaging and advertisements, even letting them name games after themselves, like *David's Midnight Magic*.

Alongside games, Brøderbund became well-known for utilities and educational software.

By 1979 Doug found he was earning more as a programmer than as an attorney, with strategy sequel *Galactic Trader* under his belt, a third game, *Galactic Revolution*, under way, and weekly royalty cheques of several hundred dollars each, amounting to around $1,000 a month, rolling in. He made the brave decision to quit his law partnership, and opted to pay a visit to his brother, Gary, who was living in the sleepy town of Eugene, Oregon, on the other side of the country. Doug made the 3,000-mile journey west in his battered Chevy Impala with his beloved TRS-80 on the back seat.

Gary had recently departed a position at a local health charity, following an eclectic range of jobs that included teaching Swedish and coaching the national women's basketball team in Stockholm. Being of Swedish ancestry himself, he had majored in Scandinavian languages, also at Harvard. The brothers moved into a rented house, where Doug showed him some of the games he had written and proposed going into partnership in their own software publishing company. Not overly familiar with computers, Gary was at first reluctant.

"I told Doug I already owed two people money – including him – for businesses which never got off the ground and I didn't want to go through it again," he remembers. "He replied: 'How are you going to pay your share of the rent?' So I





“ My mother’s sister sent all her grandchildren and even their friends to college with the proceeds of that stock ”

AN EARLY INVESTMENT IN BRØDERBUND PROVES LUCRATIVE

got on the phone and sold $300 worth of his software with my first call.”



Band of brothers

With Doug focused on software development and Gary in the role of salesman, the fledgling company began to find its feet. “We didn’t run ads, but we’d look for ads of people who were selling software and then we’d pick up the phone and call them,” says Doug. Many of these contacts were happy to be buying directly from the authors. But by May 1980, the phone sales strategy began to show signs of strain. “We probably had about $900 per month in sales, which was keeping the wolves from the door but not very well,” he adds.

Gary decided to take a trip to San Francisco with a suitcase of software to try to sell to computer stores in person. On this trip he managed to sell around $2,000 worth of cassettes, making enough to cover his ticket with a tidy profit on top. The brothers decided to invest more capital to allow Gary to do more travelling sales and visit computer shows to vend their wares.

“Doug had $700 worth of credit on his Visa card and we borrowed $2,000 each from our mother and her sister,” says Gary. “Our brother Don chipped in $500. They all got stock. Later, my mother’s sister sent all her grandchildren and even their friends to college with the proceeds of that stock.

“I then had a serious leg injury and was out of work for three months,” he continues. “When I returned I took over responsibility for product development and acquisition, though the final decision to publish was made by a small committee, which always included both Doug and me. Maybe nobody else, now that I think about it. At least for the first few years.”

Gary’s flair for sniffing out a good product was demonstrated when the brothers arranged to rent a booth at the West Coast Computer Faire. Gary had brought his brother’s games and an Apple computer. The booth next door was occupied by a Japanese firm called Star Craft, which had coincidentally brought some Apple games but nothing to demonstrate them on. Gary let them use his computer and was impressed by them. He quickly struck a deal to snap up the US distribution rights.

It proved to be a masterful move. One Star Craft title, *Apple Galaxian*, shifted over $100,000 worth of units in a single month. Other programmers in the US saw the games and were inspired to get in touch with the company, opening the floodgates for a wave of home-grown software for which Brøderbund would become famous.

“The third-party games came to us quickly after we published our first games from Star Craft,” explains Gary. “The Star Craft games were technically superior

BY THE NUMBERS

20 The number of separate platforms on which versions of the original *Lode Runner* were eventually released.

30 The number of international cities available to travel to in the original version of *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?*.

60 The number of minutes given to rescue the Princess from the clutches of the evil Jaffar in *Prince Of Persia*.

64 The number of hostages held captive by the Bungeling Empire in each level of the original version of *Choplifter*.

5,200 The amount, in dollars, that the Carlston’s borrowed from family members and Visa in order to set up Brøderbund.

10,000 The advance, in dollars, paid to *Lode Runner* creator Doug Smith as an incentive for him to expand the game and improve the character animation in time for the game’s release.

20,000 The total, in dollars, that the brothers made between them in 1980, before the release of *Galaxian* for the Apple II.

6,000,000 The number of copies of *Myst* sold.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



» [SNES] *Prince Of Persia 2* offered more of the same, albeit with slightly improved graphics and a greater abundance of cinematic cut-scenes.

TIMELINE

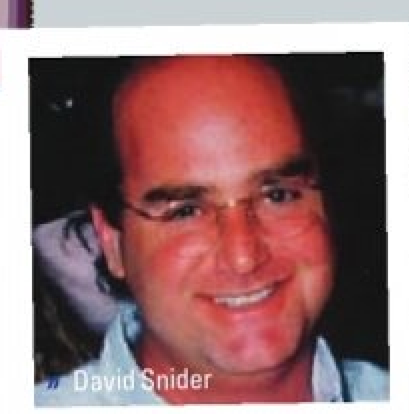
1978
DOUG CARLSTON BUYS A TANDY TRS-80 AND STARTS PROGRAMMING HIS FIRST GAME, GALACTIC EMPIRE.

1979
GALACTIC EMPIRE AND DOUG'S SECOND GAME, *GALACTIC TRADER*, ARE PUBLISHED BY SCOTT ADAMS INTERNATIONAL. DOUG RETAINS DISTRIBUTION RIGHTS, ALLOWING HIM TO SELL HIS GAMES DIRECTLY TO WHOLESALERS AND COMPUTER SHOPS.



» Doug Carlston (left) with Marc Canter, co-founder of MacroMind (later Macromedia), outside the San Rafael premises.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

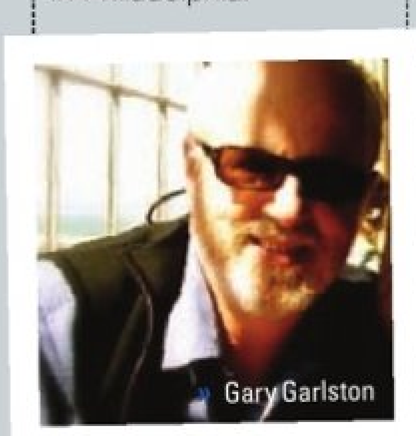

David Snider

Doug Carlston "Doug created a programming language called Tawala, then discovered customers liked the demos more than the language," says Gary. "So he and a group fleshed out a demo into what they call a Sports Dashboard, which enables volunteer-based sports leagues to run their operations easily from year to year." He is now CEO of Tawala Systems and still based in San Rafael, California.

Gary Garlston After a ten-year stint in the property development market after leaving Brøderbund, Gary is currently making great pinot noir in "God's country", with a co-ownership in recently formed Tarras Vineyards (**www.tarrasvineyards.com**). "I have spent my life encouraging talented people to do great things," he says. "I'm now hoping I can work the same magic on my kids and also become a meaningful part of a new and spectacularly high-quality wine industry in New Zealand."

David Snider David retains his Brøderbund roots and an interest in the simulation of arcade amusements with his new company, Midnight Magic Games. He is currently working on a range of video poker iPhone/iPad games. For more details, see **www.midnightmagicgames.com**.

Dan Gorlin Following *Choplifter*, *Airheart* and *Typhoon Thompson*, and nearly two decades in the industry, Dan returned to his first love: music. He now teaches and performs with the African community dance and drumming outfit Alokli in Philadelphia.


Gary Garlston

Dane Bigham On leaving Brøderbund, Dane became staff programmer at Dan Gorlin Productions, before founding Presage Software, which purchased the rights for the *Lode Runner* franchise in 1993, creating a number of well-received sequels. He's currently at IT consultancy Forte Systems.

Jordan Mechner As his screenwriting role on 2010's Disney blockbuster *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* testifies, Jordan's


Jordan Mechner

profile has never been higher. The 2003 Ubisoft game on which the film was based – he worked on it as creative consultant – remains one of the most critically acclaimed titles of the last decade. His first graphic novel, *Solomon's Thieves*, was published last year, and he's rumoured to be working on a screenplay based on his classic adventure, *The Last Express*.

Will Wright After *Bungeling Bay*, Wright wrote a program called *SimCity*, and the rest, as they say, is history. Maxis, the company he co-founded, became a major industry player with the *SimCity* line and its many spin-offs, before becoming part of EA, publisher of his all-conquering *The Sims*, and the recent *Spore*.

▶ to anything produced in the US, and American programmers wanted to meet the Japanese guys and find out how they did it, so they contacted us."

Midnight Magic

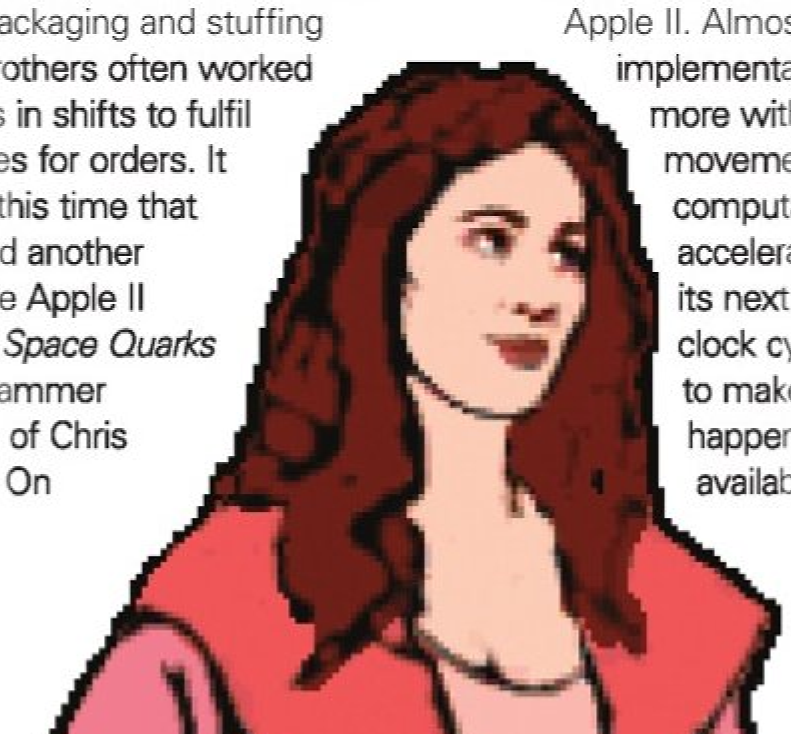
Despite Brøderbund's success with *Apple Galaxian*, the brothers' low profit margin – between 15 and 18 per cent – meant a single hit alone wasn't going to be enough to pay the bills, and they needed to expand their product range quickly. The decision to branch from the TRS-80 to Apple II software, and later platforms such as the Commodore 64 and Atari 400/800, was obviously a step in the right direction.

"We were initially concerned about picking the wrong horse if we stuck with just one computer platform," Gary admits, "but eventually it became a relatively easy business to port products from one to another. It also enabled us to acquire rights to products from any platform, whereas we would have missed out on some good ideas if we limited ourselves."

By 1981 a third Carlston, sister Cathy, had joined the company as office manager, and a second Star Craft arcade clone, *Apple Panic*, was selling nicely. The company was still very much a family business, with the three living in the same house: Cathy did the accounts in the kitchen, while Gary fielded phone calls in the living room and took turns with Doug packaging and stuffing disks. The brothers often worked 24-hour days in shifts to fulfil tight deadlines for orders. It was around this time that Gary received another *Galaxian*-style Apple II game called *Space Quarks* from a programmer by the name of Chris Jochumson. On booting the game he immediately called Chris and offered him $1,000 plus a percentage of the sales, making him one of the first onto Brøderbund's roster of regular contract programmers in the process.

Another of the first wave of US-based programmers to go on Brøderbund's books was David Snider, whose pinball simulation, *David's Midnight Magic*, proved a considerable hit for the company, and went on to win a game of the year award in *Electronic Games* magazine. "My family had purchased an Apple II in 1977," recalls David. "Around the time of my last college semester one of the coolest games I had ever seen came out: *Raster Blaster* by Bill Budge. It was a video pinball game based on the layout of *Firepower* by Williams Electronics. I had already decided that after college I would see if I could make a living writing software for the Apple II, and in case that didn't go well, I was pretty sure those big companies would still be glad to have me. After playing *Raster Blaster* a bit I knew I wanted to make something similar: a video pinball simulation.

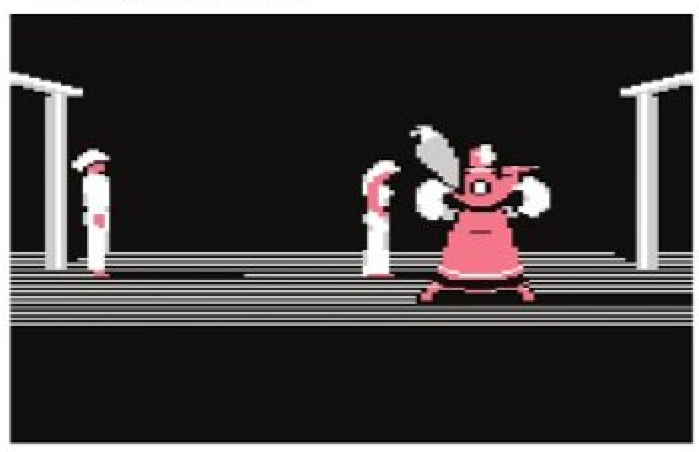
"It was a challenge making the simulation feel 'right' on an 8-bit, 1MHz Apple II. Almost everything about the implementation involved doing more with less – for example, the movement of the ball involved computations using speed and acceleration vectors to determine its next position. We counted CPU clock cycles and microseconds to make sure what needed to happen did happen in the time available. When it worked,



- **1980** – BRØDERBUND OFFICIALLY FORMED, WITH BROTHER GARY IN A SALES AND MARKETING ROLE AND DOUG CONTINUING TO DEVELOP *GALACTIC SAGA* TITLES
- **1981** – GARY CARLSTON ACQUIRES THE US DISTRIBUTION RIGHTS TO APPLE II GAMES BY JAPANESE FIRM STAR CRAFT. ONE GAME RESULTING FROM THE DEAL, *APPLE GALAXIAN*, MAKES $100,000 IN SALES IN ONE MONTH. *DAVID'S MIDNIGHT MAGIC* IS RELEASED IN DECEMBER, RECEIVING A GAME OF THE YEAR AWARD IN *ELECTRONIC GAMES* MAGAZINE
- **1982** – *CHOPLIFTER* IS RELEASED AND BECOMES ANOTHER SUCCESS FOR BRØDERBUND. THE COMPANY'S PORTFOLIO IS BOOSTED BY JAPANESE TITLES LIKE *A.E.* AND *STAR BLAZER*, AND GRAPHIC ADVENTURE *THE MASK OF THE SUN*
- **1983** – *LODE RUNNER* AND *SPELUNKER* RELEASED. THE FORMER IS ONE OF THE FIRST GAMES TO FEATURE A LEVEL EDITOR
- **1984** – JORDAN MECHNER AND WILL WRIGHT DEBUT FOR BRØDERBUND WITH *KARATEKA* AND *RAID ON BUNGELING BAY*. OTHER RELEASES THIS YEAR INCLUDE *THE CASTLES OF DR CREEP* AND *THE ANCIENT ART OF WAR*
- **1985** – EXPLORATIONAL ADVENTURE *WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?* HITS STORES
- **1989** – MECHNER'S GROUNDBREAKING *PRINCE OF PERSIA* PUBLISHED FOR THE APPLE II. GARY AND CATHY CARLSTON DEPART THE COMPANY
- **1993** – *MYST* AND *PRINCE OF PERSIA 2: THE SHADOW AND THE FLAME* PUBLISHED
- **1998** – BRØDERBUND IS BOUGHT OUT BY THE LEARNING COMPANY IN A $606 MILLION TAKEOVER. DOUG CARLSTON LEAVES THE COMPANY



» [Amiga] Seaborne shooter *Typhoon Thompson In Search For The Sea Child* was Dan Gorlin's last Brøderbund game.



» [Apple II] *Karateka*'s distinctly cinematic stylings paved the way for *Prince Of Persia*.

> **"I knew Choplifter was a hit the moment I saw it. It was technically top notch and just plain fun"**
>
> GARY CARLSTON SPOTS ONE OF BRØDERBUND'S MOST ENDURING HITS

when the animations were right and the simulation felt real, it was great.

"I had a terrific time working with Doug and Gary. I'd say I spent more time working with Gary, talking about game design, brainstorming what we could add to a game to make it more fun. Doug enjoyed this, too, but he had to spend more of his time running the business side of the company while Gary would focus more on finding and developing new projects."

"We liked things that were a technical tour de force and fun to play. Nothing indecent other than occasionally blowing up things," chuckles Gary, describing the company's fairly relaxed product-selection stance. 1981 proved to be a fantastic year for Brøderbund, with the company booking over $1 million in sales, boasting a growing catalogue of hit Apple II titles, and completing a long-distance relocation to new premises in the hills of San Rafael, California. "After 18 months, the point when we drove a convoy down from Oregon and started up in California, things grew pretty quickly."

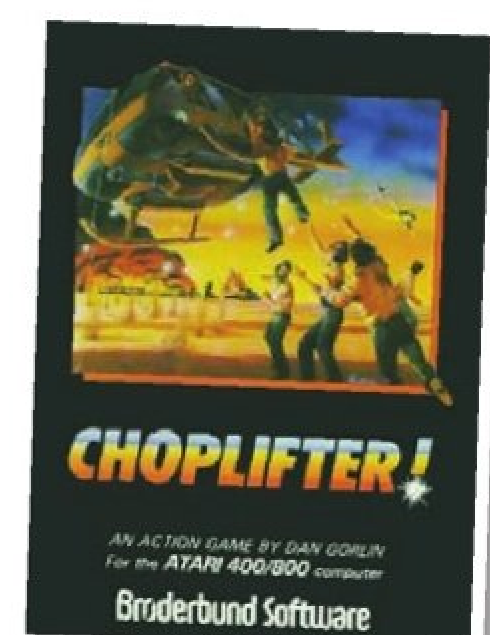
Choplifter

If the previous year had been a blinder for Brøderbund, 1982 started just as well when Dan Gorlin walked into a computer store in Los Angeles and mentioned a helicopter game he had been programming. The employee suggested he give the Carlstons a call. A musician by trade, Gorlin had been experimenting with a borrowed Apple II and, inspired by the recent Iranian hostage crisis, had put together an action game with remarkably realistic physics in which players piloted a rescue chopper in a bid to save US civilians from an oppressive militaristic regime.

"Even though they were just little white figures, this was the first computer-based videogame with animated people," says Gary, remembering his first encounter with Gorlin's creation, *Choplifter*. "Originally the helicopters were too hard to fly, so I asked Dan to make it a little less realistic and therefore a little easier. But I knew it was a hit the moment I saw it. It was technically top notch and just plain fun."

Gary's hunch proved right, of course. The game was massively popular, and later ported to a wide range of computer platforms and consoles. It also became one of two Brøderbund titles, along with *Lode Runner*, to make the journey east as an arcade game conversion, a feat few US-based companies have managed before or since. "We asked for much lower royalties than other American companies," explains Gary of the deal with the Japanese manufacturer, "but then we actually followed through and audited their books in Japan, which caught them off guard and probably evened out the amount they actually paid American companies for game rights."

Programmer Dane Bigham was behind the Commodore 64 ports of both *Choplifter* and *Lode Runner*, and ▶

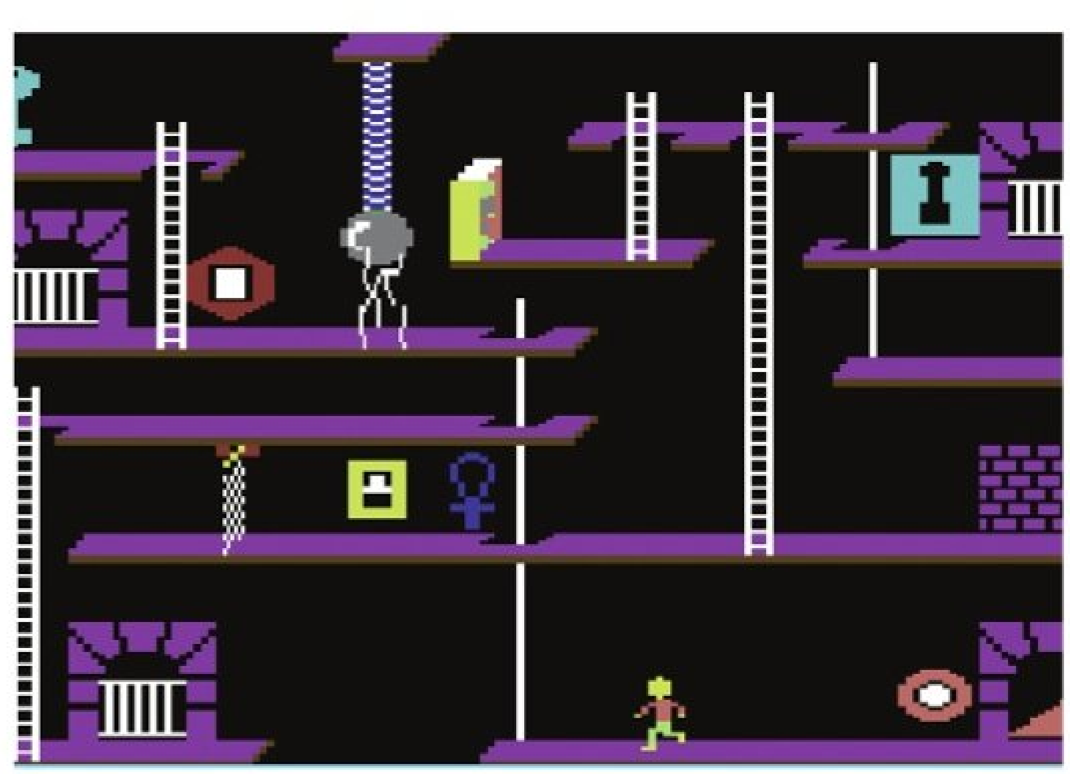


BEHIND THE NAME

The Brøderbund company name has led to much conjecture over the years regarding its origins, with many, including the press, assuming that the name arises from the Swedish term for 'brotherhood'. The roots of the name are, in fact, slightly darker in origin, as Gary Carlston candidly explains: "Unfortunately, Doug had slightly unprogressive reasons for originally using the name in one of his games. They were an insidious group of traders and he took the name from the South African Broederbond, which was a secret society of Afrikaners that took over the Civil Service and eventually became a shadow government during apartheid. Doug taught in Botswana in the Sixties and was familiar with the South African organisation. We changed the spelling to a more Scandinavian one to make it more benign – it mean's 'association of brothers' in any Germanic language – and to create a pun with the slashed Danish 'ø' and a computer Ø for zero. We did encounter some flak from university campuses for the name but encouraged those concerned to direct their energies more appropriately, as we had no influence on the South African government."



» [PC] The 1995 CD-ROM version of *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?* replaced the original's hand-drawn graphics with photographic locations.



» [C64] *The Castles Of Dr Creep* was an excellent and fiendishly designed platform game with a two-player co-operative mode and a strong puzzle and exploration element.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

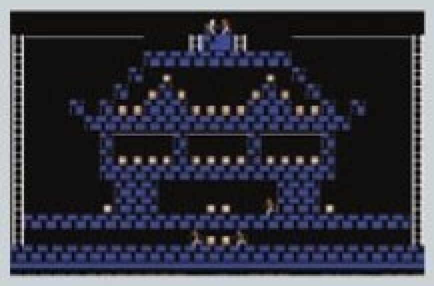


[PC] *The Last Express* used digital rotoscoping to painstakingly transform actors into hand-drawn animated characters.

SIX OF THE BEST



Choplifter (1982)
Channelling *Defender* and the Iranian hostage crisis, Dan Gorlin's rescue-'em-up became the first game to beat the VisiCalc spreadsheet on the US sales charts. Gorlin's eye for detail gave *Choplifter* a uniquely playable quality.



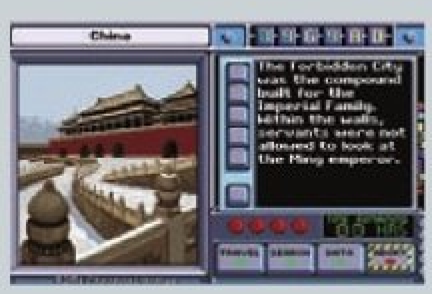
Lode Runner (1983)
Part *Space Panic*, part platform-puzzler, *Lode Runner* demanded fast reactions and even quicker thinking in order for players to make it through its dizzying number of levels and grab themselves a decent chunk of Bungeling loot.



Raid On Bungeling Bay (1984)
SimCity meets *Choplifter* in Will Wright's tactical shoot-'em-up. The game pits the player's lone pilot against the industrial war machine of the Bungeling Empire, with a scary battleship that must be destroyed before it can set sail.



Prince Of Persia (1989)
What Jordan Mechner achieved on the Apple II with his rotoscoped platform epic left industry veterans wide-eyed in amazement. The game went on to become one of the most ported of all time, selling over 2 million copies.



Where In Time Is Carmen Sandiego? (1989)
The fourth *Carmen Sandiego* instalment is a cracking game. Adding time-travelling to the globe-trotting formula proves a genius move as players track Carmen and her henchmen through history.



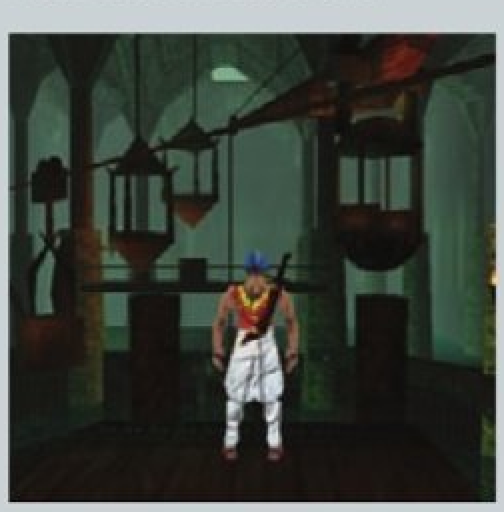
The Last Express (1997)
Despite disappointing sales, *The Last Express* was perhaps Jordan Mechner's most intriguing Brøderbund game. A Hitchcockian adventure set on the Orient Express, it was a hugely ambitious project with a real-time interactive narrative.

TWO TO AVOID



Prince Of Persia 3D (1999)
The success of *Tomb Raider* may well have inspired this final entry in the original *Prince Of Persia* trilogy. Unfortunately it's not a patch on any of Lara's adventures, with an overcomplicated control system, a flaky camera and a complete absence of the fluid animation that graced the first two games in the series. Tellingly, series creator Jordan Mechner says he only ever made it to the second level.

Stealth (1984)
Flying a low-level fighter plane through enemy-infested territory sounds exciting, but *Stealth* falls short in terms of playability or thrills. Looking like a cut-down version of the Sega arcade game *Buck Rogers: Planet Of Zoom*, it's pretty, but the monotony of your mission to destroy the Black Tower, for the most part represented by a dull black vertical line in the distance, soon kicks in.



remembers the experience of working with Gorlin well. "I was 18 years old when Brøderbund hired me," he recalls. "My first projects were conversions from Apple II to Commodore 64, and *Choplifter* was my first project. I absolutely could not believe my good fortune as *Choplifter* was a big hit and I played it in high school. Gary had Dan conduct my technical interview when I was being hired. Talk about intimidating!

"When I interviewed I concentrated on Apple II 6502 and put together a demo disk with a moving star field, but I had zero experience on the C64 itself. The bitmapped graphics were laid out differently, and the sprites were a whole new concept to me. Did you know that if you had sprite 7 enabled, then disk access would fail? Of course, just sometimes. That was hard to find. *Choplifter* and *Lode Runner* were cartridge-based, but there was a diskette version of *Lode Runner*, and you could save your own levels.

"The environment at Brøderbund was stellar – it was casual, programmers set their own hours, and the trust was deep. After three years I went to work for Dan, down the street from the company. He was finishing up his next game, *Airheart*, which would later morph into *Typhoon Thompson In Search For The Sea Child*. At his direction, we built a cross-development system on Sun workstations. We wrote all our own remote-control software that loaded the game onto the target computer."

The Bungeling Empire

Choplifter's success was influential on two other Brøderbund titles, which shared the dastardly antagonists of Gorlin's game: the Bungeling Empire. The first was Doug Smith's ingenious *Lode Runner*, a deceptively simple but addictive title consisting of 150 screens of gold-grabbing platform hi-jinks. "The graphics were smaller and cruder when it was first submitted, and it looked to me initially like a copy of *Apple Panic*," admits Gary. "Then, while playing it, I got up to about level 30 and I thought, 'Wow, these puzzles are really clever.' When Doug said he could improve the graphics and even put a level editor into the game, I was sold."

The second was a helicopter game from Will Wright, although with a top-down perspective as opposed to *Choplifter*'s horizontal view. The game was the C64 release *Raid On Bungeling Bay*, and in many ways it's one of the most fascinating of Brøderbund's products of the period. Looking at the game now it certainly looks like an early blueprint of what became Wright's signature franchise, *SimCity*. Dane recalls encountering Will's work at the time: "When he submitted *SimCity* for publication consideration at Brøderbund, sadly I opined that it was kind of boring. I was just one guy, and not in charge of such decisions. Man, was I wrong about that game. As you know, Brøderbund didn't publish *SimCity*, and Maxis was born. And the product line speaks for itself."

Another high-profile designer who got his big break with the company was a young Jordan Mechner, future creator of *Prince Of Persia* and *The Last Express*. Mechner's game was a beautifully animated, if slightly repetitive, take on the martial arts genre called *Karateka*, which, despite the Apple II's limited graphic abilities, shows a remarkable sense of cinematic flair. "I originally turned the game down because it didn't seem to have much gameplay," Gary reveals. "I had not yet sent the rejection letter when it



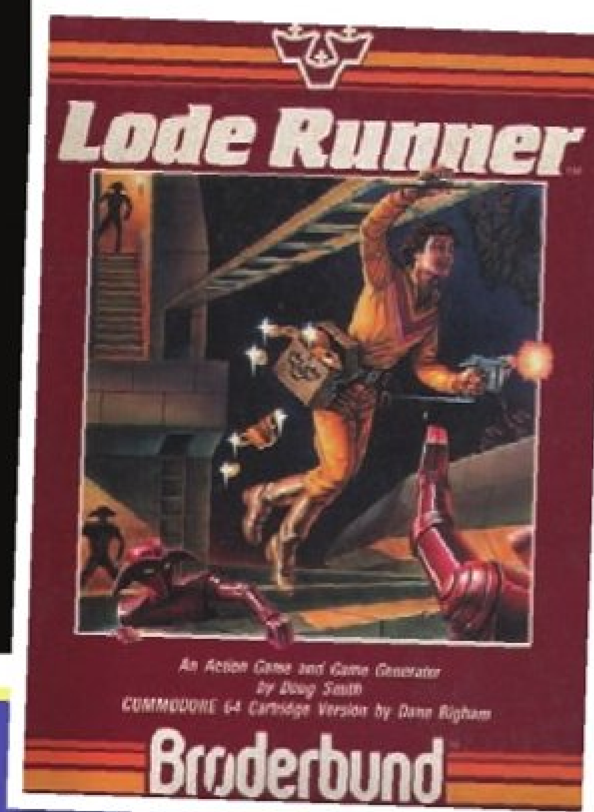
» [PC] *The Ancient Art Of War*, based on the historical strategy text by Sun Tzu, is widely regarded as one of the first RTSs.

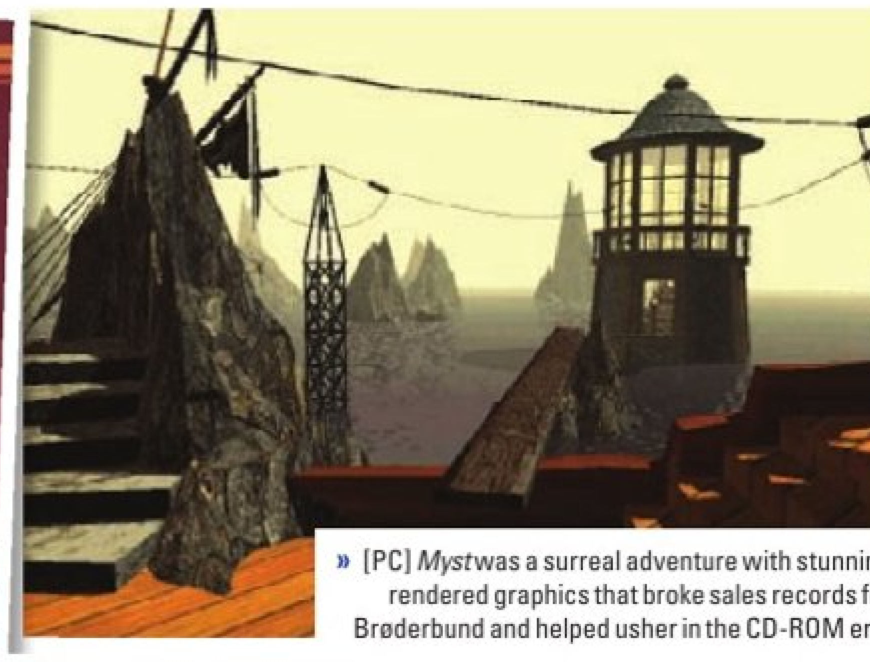


» In Europe, much of Brøderbund's catalogue was distributed by Ariolasoft, a subsidiary of the German music publisher Ariola Records.

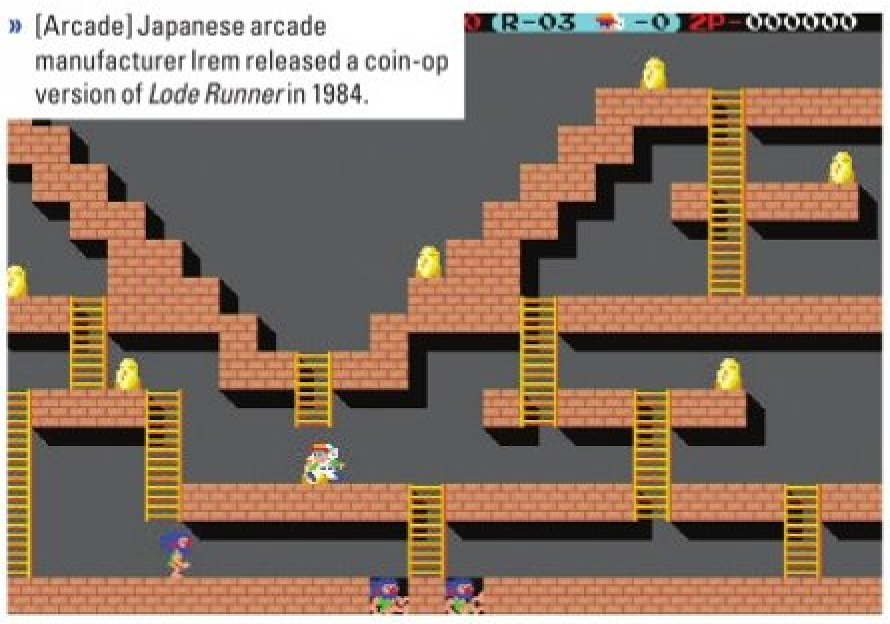


» [MSX] *Championship Lode Runner* was a package of 50 highly challenging levels designed by fans using the in-game level editor.





» [PC] *Myst* was a surreal adventure with stunning rendered graphics that broke sales records for Brøderbund and helped usher in the CD-ROM era.



» [Arcade] Japanese arcade manufacturer Irem released a coin-op version of *Lode Runner* in 1984.









» The Carlstons pose for an *Antic* magazine interview in October 1983 (left to right: Doug, Cathy, Gary).

turned out that we had an empty computer monitor at the Chicago CES and we needed something to put there. Since *Karateka* was pretty we used it. Naturally that was the monitor everyone gravitated toward, so we signed Jordan up."

Prince Of Persia and beyond

Signing Mechner proved to be another of Gary's many smart moves by the time of *Prince Of Persia*, a smash hit platform game that broke new ground in terms of art direction and animation, and kick-started a blockbuster franchise. "I watched Jordan and his team create this game in offices they shared with us," remembers Gary. "I was struck by how Jordan used video footage of real people to create the animation. We're used to this kind of thing now, but then it was really innovative. Also a heck of a lot of work."



Although he had officially left Brøderbund by the time he encountered Mechner's Apple II original, Dane Bigham was involved in the Macintosh version, and remembers him well. "Even when he was around with *Karateka* he was writing screenplays," he says. "*Prince Of Persia* was astounding. I took home an Apple II and didn't leave my house for a few days. I immediately approached him and got my then company, Presage, the job to convert it to the Mac, in colour, with vastly upgraded graphics and sound and music."

Sadly, the production of that game was one of the last Gary would witness at the company he had co-founded, when he resigned from his position at the end of the Eighties, along with Cathy, who left to have a baby. "I remember one of our competitors in 1982 saying that word on the street was that we would go out of business because we fought so much," he admits, referring to his relationship with Doug. "The reality was the opposite. While the fighting was actual, the prospect of getting in trouble with our parents if we blew Mom's 2,000 bucks kept us from actually breaking up. At the same time, when I finally left in 1989, I remember saying that I wanted us all to go back to being a family; that I couldn't stand being business partners any more."

The late Eighties and early Nineties would also bring successes like *Prince Of Persia 2: The Shadow And The Flame*, *Carmen Sandiego* and *Myst*, the bestselling PC game ever until *The Sims*. In 1998 Brøderbund was acquired by The Learning Company, which laid off around 500 employees, a point at which Doug decided to take his leave. The Learning Company was swallowed up by Mattel a year later, and the publishing rights for the company's back catalogue, including *Myst* and *Prince Of Persia*, are now in the hands of Ubisoft.

Despite being over 20 years since he left, Gary still regards his time at Brøderbund with fondness. "Even when we were most stressed out, I would say to people, 'We will remember these as the good old days,' and we do," he says. "We recently held a reunion where hundreds of people came, even though the company folded 12 years ago. I've really enjoyed the successes of people like Jordan and Will, and many others who have succeeded in less public ways. I'm still friends with all of them."



CARMEN SANDIEGO

One of Gary's most personal projects was *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?*, which sought to teach geographical trivia while the player's agent tracked the notoriously elusive Carmen and her henchmen in a globe-trotting adventure. The game spawned a host of sequels, and later CD-ROM remakes, board games and even a TV series. "I remember how fascinated the three brothers in my family had been with almanacs when we were kids," says Gary, "constantly quizzing each other on everything from state capitals to tallest mountains, so I wanted to encourage that in an adventure game. *Carmen* wasn't meant for the educational market; it was simply intended to be a socially redeeming computer game. It languished for about 18 months in the marketplace and then suddenly teachers found out about it and kids started playing it at school."

"*Carmen* was a true collaboration," says designer Dane Bigham. "I was working on an adventure game for kids, as a concept, which started to evolve into a mystery/cops-and-robbers theme. Gary introduced *The World Almanac*. Gene Portwood and Lauren Elliott worked as artists and character designers. They really brought the character and story to the table, and Gene's humour is legendary at Brøderbund.

"It was very deliberate that our products be a game first and educational second. In fact, the product was categorised as 'explorational' because the categories 'educational' and 'edutainment' had a stigma of being boring. My role in *Carmen*, besides programming, was to design the gameplay. The whole mechanism for chasing from city to city, how that was paced, and that the player 'logged in' with their progress tracked over time, was my work. Can you tell I am proud of it?"

Minority Report

Welcome back to Minority Report, the section of the magazine where we highlight classic games for lesser-known systems and hidden gems for better-known ones. This month **Darran's** got stuck into the Oric-1, a number of handheld consoles and more…



» ORIC-1



» [Oric] We're not sure what it is, but reaching for that crystal sets the monkey/dinosaur hybrid on you.

ZORGON'S REVENGE

■ SYSTEM: ORIC-1 ■ DEVELOPER: JOHN SINCLAIR ■ YEAR: 1983

■ ***Zorgon's Revenge*** **is a hard game. In fact, it's tougher than granite that's been encased in diamond, which has been encased in an extra thick layer of adamantine. And yet we still can't stop playing the damn thing.**

Released relatively early in the Oric's life, it's a kind of sequel to John Sinclair's equally impressive *Xenon 1*. Whereas John's earlier game was a straightforward shoot-'em-up – and a bloody good one to boot – *Zorgon's Revenge* had far more variety to it.

First off it looks absolutely beautiful – well, as beautiful as any Oric game could ever hope to look – thanks to super-slick animation, well-defined sprites and some truly glorious high-resolution visuals. It was a fantastic showcase title for the machine at the time of its release, and even now it still manages to impress.

While the smart visuals were more than enough to get you instantly hooked, it was *Zorgon's Revenge*'s actual gameplay that proved to be the clincher, and while it boasted plenty of amazingly unfair moments – more on those later – it was so compelling to play that it became rather difficult to put down.

At the beginning of the game you're given the option of choosing from one of four randomly selected levels, which change their position each time you play. They all range in both variety and difficulty but the aim of each is always the same: collect the solitary crystal.

One stage is set in a cavern and requires you to dodge pterodactyls, giant spiders and what's either a hairless red monkey or a laser-spitting Tyrannosaurus rex – we're not sure,

» NEO GEO POCKET COLOR



» GALS FIGHTERS

■ SYSTEM: NEO GEO POCKET COLOR
■ DEVELOPER: SNK ■ YEAR: 2000

■ **Crossovers of popular** franchises are always good value for money, but this sassy offering from SNK is one of the better ones. Popular female characters from a number of classic SNK franchises including *King Of Fighters*, *Last Blade*, *Psycho Soldier* and *Fatal Fury* all get together for one big dust-up.

While the combat is very similar to a great many of SNK's fighters – no bad thing in itself – *Gals Fighters* comes to life thanks to its fizzy charm, amazingly cute visuals and fantastic playability. There aren't that many characters on offer, but that just gives you the opportunity to actually learn them. Nutty fun.

» GAME GEAR



» BAKU BAKU ANIMAL

■ SYSTEM: GAME GEAR
■ DEVELOPER: SEGA ■ YEAR: 1996

■ **Fans of puzzle** games would do well to track down this increasingly rare Game Gear release. Similar to the Master System version, which in turn was a cut-down version of the arcade and Saturn game, *Baku Baku Animal* has you matching animals to their favourite foods. Once sated, they will disappear, dumping blocks onto your opponent's screen.

The style of the gameplay is very similar to *Tetris Attack*, and while the mechanics on offer are nothing new, it's a surprisingly compelling and addictive game, especially if you can find a second cartridge for the multiplayer mode.

» VIRTUAL BOY



» MARIO CLASH

■ SYSTEM: VIRTUAL BOY
■ DEVELOPER: NINTENDO ■ YEAR: 1995

■ **With Nintendo's new** 3DS console now available, we felt it was only fair to look back at one of its earlier headache-inducing 3D games. Although Mario didn't appear in any conventional platformers on the Virtual Boy – that was left to Wario in the excellent *Wario Land* – he did appear in *Mario Clash*, a charming update of his old *Mario Bros* arcade game.

It's pretty fun as well, requiring you to leap on Koopas and throw their shells into other enemies. The 3D effect is fairly convincing and there are some clever score mechanics at work. It's a little slow and jerky but surprisingly good fun to play.



» [Oric] John Sinclair must like his shmups as he's sneaked one into *Zorgon's Revenge*.



» [Oric] Blue shows completed stages, so you're nearly there now.



» ABOUT THE SYSTEM

- Tangerine formed Oric Products International Ltd in 1983, which led immediately to the development of the Oric-1, released later that year.
- It is estimated that over 160,000 machines were sold in the UK, which is an impressive number but well below the 350,000 that was originally predicted.

to be honest – while another has you dodging hydra breath and avoiding randomly activated laser beams.

There's more, though. Another stage is set in a huge cavern that features falling rocks – or eggs maybe – and a large bird. You need to dodge past the falling debris and grab the bird. It then flies you to the middle of the screen where you must once again cross the play area and avoid the now dangerously close falling obstacles. Manage this and you need to make an annoyingly harsh leap of faith onto the same bird in order to reach your prize. Fail to catch him, though, and you'll be splattered over the floor below. The final stage, and our favourite, requires you to pilot a small ship and shoot your way to victory. It's the easiest stage by far, although this could be more due to our complete skill with the genre than a lapse in difficulty on John's part.

Even this isn't the end, though, as recovering crystals transports you to another screen outside the walls of a castle. Dodge the egg-dropping birds – we've never understood why birds would want to pelt you with their unborn young, but we'll suspend our disbelief – to drop a section of the bridge. Do this four times in order to face a final maddening encounter inside the castle walls. Manage this impossibly tough feat and you'll finally be reunited with your loved one. Aww.

Maddeningly frustrating due to certain sections requiring pixel-perfect jumps, *Zorgan's Revenge* nevertheless manages to be a slick and thoroughly enjoyable piece of programming and a good showcase for the Oric's capabilities.



» [Oric] You'll need to complete all four levels before you can reach the Princess inside.



» VECTREX

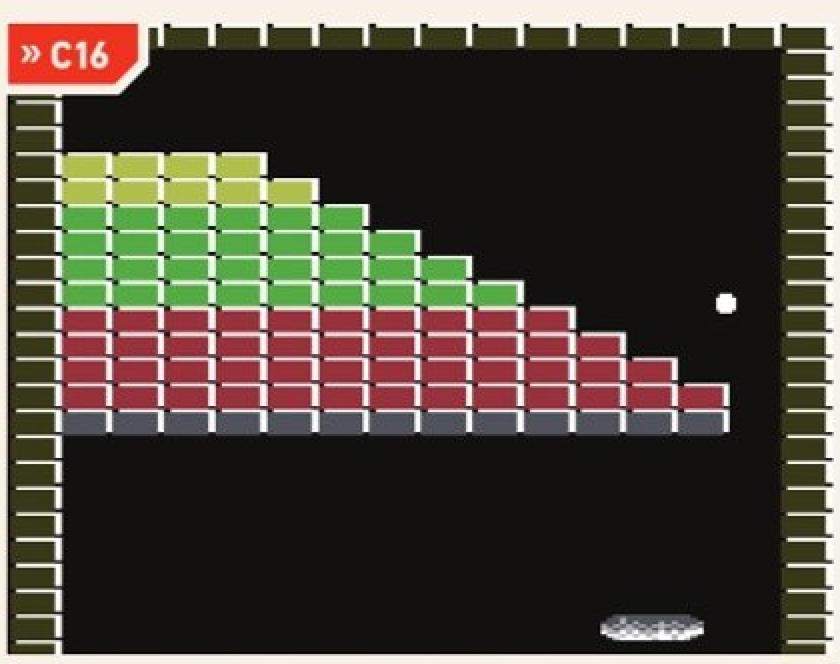
» STAR CASTLE

- SYSTEM: VECTREX
- DEVELOPER: CINEMATRONICS ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Oddly considering its** greatness, Tim Skelly's *Star Castle* only received a port to the Vectrex. Fortunately it's a very good one, thanks to tight controls and great visuals, which perfectly capture the stark beauty of the original 1980 arcade game.

The titular *Star Castle* sits in the centre of the screen, and you must shoot down its shields in order to destroy it. It sounds easy, but regenerating shields and homing mines ensure that it's anything but.

Yes, it's hard as nails, but it's also amazingly addictive and, aside from some poor LCD ports, this is the only alternative to the arcade original.



» C16

» ARTHUR NOID

- SYSTEM: C16
- DEVELOPER: SHAUN SOUTHERN ■ YEAR: 1988

■ **If last month's** Attack of the Clones taught us anything, it's that knock-offs of popular arcade games were everywhere in the Eighties. This offering, if you couldn't tell by the name or screenshot, is a clone of Taito's *Arkanoid*, and bloody good it is too. Programmed by Shaun Southern, it's a typically slick piece of code that has all the power-ups of the arcade original, extremely similar level layouts that are sometimes identical to the last brick, and an annoying addictive quality that keeps dragging you back for one more play. Considering that *Arkanoid* wasn't released on the C16, this filled the gap perfectly.



» VIC-20

» ARCADIA

- SYSTEM: VIC-20
- DEVELOPER: IMAGINE SOFTWARE ■ RELEASED: 1982

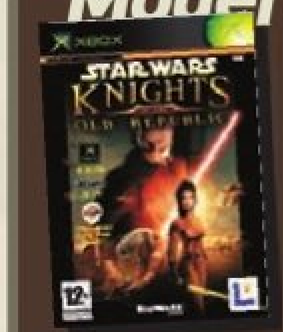
■ ***Arcadia* is one** of those rare examples where the VIC-20 version totally wipes the floor with its C64 counterpart. Playing like a cross between *Galaxian* and *Space Invaders*, it's a ridiculously tough blaster that has you shooting down waves of enemies as they slowly descend towards you.

There's great risk and reward to *Arcadia*, as your ship's bullets only have a limited range, meaning you have to get dangerously close to the enemies. Add in the fact that you'll need to occasionally boost to get past the descending waves and it becomes an insanely tough but very satisfying shooter.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come





INFO

- **Featured System:** Xbox
- **Year Released:** 2003
- **Publisher:** LucasArts
- **Developer:** BioWare
- **Key People:** Casey Hudson (producer/director), Ray Muzyka (executive producer), Greg Zeschuk (executive producer), Jeremy Soule (composer)

GO DEEPER

- **LucasArts encouraged BioWare to blow up a planet in carving this new chapter of *Star Wars*.**
- **BioWare even added to the *Star Wars* expanded universe in *KOTOR*, debuting and naming the Selkath species.**



09. STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

After years of inconsistent games set in the Star Wars universe, LucasArts collaborated with BioWare to create a new masterpiece set thousands of years before the movie saga

THE BACKGROUND

Knights Of The Old Republic was the first ever *Star Wars* RPG. Though the idea of playing as a Jedi had been captured with some sophistication in the PC title *Jedi Knight* and its expansion, *Mysteries Of The Sith*, LucasArts wanted to create an experience that would capture the complex ramifications of fulfilling the role of a Jedi. The publisher approached RPG specialist BioWare due to its work on *Baldur's Gate*, its sequel and *Neverwinter Nights*, where the developer had pioneered use of good and bad moral choices to affect the course of the narrative – the type that fit perfectly with the light/dark struggle at the centre of *Star Wars*.

The two platforms chosen for development were the PC and Xbox, the former of which the developer was familiar with, while the latter presented an opportunity to debut a big RPG franchise without much competition. BioWare chose to take the storyline 4,000 years back from the rise of the Galactic Empire, which gave it the perfect canvas to create all-new characters and storylines without treading on the toes of the movie canon. The resulting storyline elevated all of the most exciting features of the *Star Wars* universe, while cutting out most of the crap that many believed damaged the prequel trilogy. Players, meanwhile, were blown away by the depth of the narrative possibilities and attention to detail with the licence.

THE GAME

KOTOR accomplishes something that LucasArts had always been meaning to do but never quite managed on this scale: to completely envelop the player in an interactive *Star Wars* narrative, one that would represent every tiny aspect that made this fictional universe special to moviegoers.

It allowed us to create a character, choose a class then develop them into a Jedi over the course of the game, recruiting a team of specialists to bring down Darth Malak and the Sith Empire. This reasonably interesting bunch of characters included the Wookiee

Things of note











One-time offer

BioWare passed on the opportunity to develop a sequel, instead recommending Obsidian for the task. *KOTOR II* is a buggy but ultimately valid follow-up to the original.

Old places, new faces

One of BioWare's goals was to connect the game and the old trilogy. That's primarily conveyed through returning settings, like Tatooine and even Yavin in the game's DLC.

Distractions

KOTOR's mini-games included Pazaak, turret shooting and swoop bike racing, which brought a nice level of variety to the experience despite some rough edges.

Continued in spirit

Though it may be a long time before we get a single-player experience set in this period, BioWare has been working on spiritual successor MMO *The Old Republic* for years now.

Dark or light

The choices between the dark and light side are frequently challenging, and range from small decisions between right and wrong to those that shape the future of the galaxy.



» [Xbox] Nothing starring Skywalker and company was ever this good.



» [Xbox] *Star Wars* games have always been inconsistent, but *KOTOR* is arguably the franchise's all-time high point in the medium.



What the press thought

GamePro
Score: 8/10
"It's a testament to the strength of *Knights*' design that it manages to be engaging while in the midst of distracting technical problems."

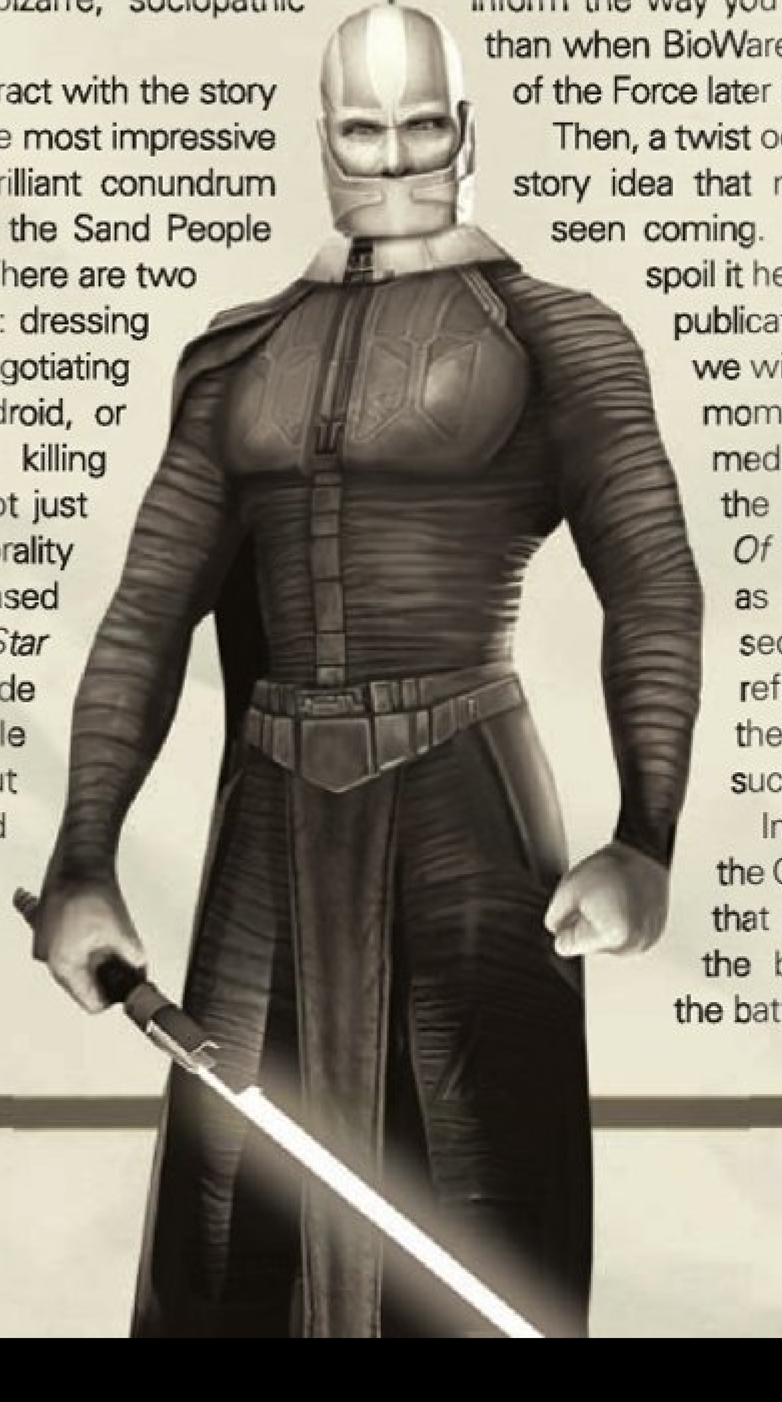




games™
Score: 9/10
"An inspirational use of the *Star Wars* licence."

Zaalbar and the daring Carth Onasi, but all were overshadowed by the droid HK-47, a hilariously disturbed assassin with a bizarre, sociopathic hatred for living things.

Yet it's the way we can interact with the story on multiple levels that is still the most impressive feature of the game. One brilliant conundrum has players sent to deal with the Sand People by a corporation on Tatooine. There are two ways of handling the situation: dressing up as one of them and negotiating peacefully using a protocol droid, or marching in and mercilessly killing them all. Of course, you're not just making a choice based on morality here – you're making one based on your attachment to the *Star Wars* universe. You might decide to murder the Sand People because they freaked you out as a kid when you watched *A New Hope*, which would have absolutely nothing to do with the morality of the situation at hand. That was the fundamental appeal of *Knights Of The Old Republic* in action, then: letting your memories of *Star Wars* inform the way you played, never more poignantly than when BioWare dealt with the dark/light sides of the Force later in the game.



Then, a twist occurs – one devastatingly clever story idea that no player could possibly have seen coming. In that plot twist – we won't spoil it here, even though one prominent publication notably did so at the time – we witnessed the greatest *Star Wars* moment in a popular entertainment medium since the destruction of the second Death Star in *Return Of The Jedi*. *KOTOR*'s reputation as an essential RPG was already secured, but this made players reflect on every single action they'd made up until that point, such was its impact.

Independently of that, though, the Canadian developer built an RPG that was extremely strong across the board, from the animation of the battles to the use of the *Star Wars* audio/visual trademarks. *KOTOR* boasted *Dungeons & Dragons*-infused combat mechanics, yet the classy, cinematic look of the game disguised all of the number-crunching going on behind the scenes.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

We'll be playing *Knights Of The Old Republic* long into the future because there's never been a *Star Wars* adaptation quite like this, both tapping into our nostalgia for the movies and displaying relentless creativity in expanding the fiction. Fans had long wanted to experiment with the polarised morality of the *Star Wars* universe, and *KOTOR* allowed this freedom, in a way that kept it relevant to the narrative.

BioWare took one of the most popular properties in the world and reminded us of why we all cared in the first place. A strong but inferior sequel from another developer followed, reaffirming how much the original achieved in capturing the essence of *Star Wars*, whether in the space battles, Lightsaber duels, immense scope of the galactic civilisation or simple conversations with Twi'lek passers-by. The RPG pays tribute to the source material, yet reappropriates it in a fashion that increases the oft-questioned credibility of the franchise.

RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN

M4 was hired by one of Japan's most prominent games companies to further one of the world's biggest intellectual properties, working alongside the renowned Shinji Mikami in the process. John Szczepaniak tracks down and talks to the British team behind this underappreciated gem



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN INTERACTIVE (UK) / CAPCOM (USA/JPN)

» **DEVELOPER:** M4

» **RELEASED:** 2001

» **GENRE:** SURVIVAL-HORROR

In recent years, Capcom has been under the spotlight as a Japanese company outsourcing development to the West. But while the world debates the success of these ventures, one of Capcom's earlier forays into outsourcing produced a true gem: *Resident Evil Gaiden* on the Game Boy Color is an underappreciated classic, and it was all thanks to a little British company called M4. The history of the team dates back further though, to another developer called BITS.

Tim Hull, producer and designer on *Gaiden*, clarified things. "M4 was formed by myself and James Cox [Engine Programmer], at the end of 1995. We had mostly worked on 8- and 16-bit licensed titles at BITS. Anything from *Itchy & Scratchy* to Sony's first forays into games with film titles like *Frankenstein* and *No Escape*. Shahid Ahmad, our contracted musician at M4, was also at BITS."

Gaiden's lead programmer, Kieron Wheeler, was also ex-BITS, though he wasn't always a coder. "I joined in 1995 having met both Tim and James while working at BITS as a 3D graphic artist," he remembers. "I had gotten more into coding games, working on odds and ends for others, and I was looking for a move that allowed more – M4 was my first full-time coding job. With James doing the tools and engine, I took on the application side and gameplay stuff for *Gaiden*."

Artists Elliot Curtis and Stefan Barnett joined the company later. As Elliot explained: "I joined in 1998 when the GBC was just released. I had plenty of experience as an artist on GB and SNES but this was my first job as artist and designer. Our first project, *Tazmanian Devil*, took a while because James built all the development tools. The tools were brilliant and we used them to create a string of GBC games, adding features to the editor as necessary."

Stefan's artistic experience was a little more unusual. "I joined as an artist in 2000. It was my first job in the games industry. I came from a varied art background and had worked as a traditional model-maker on the Pepperami adverts, in the theatre with sets and props, and also in children's books. I was thrown in at the deep end with *Gaiden* being my first project. I later became lead artist on the project, and as well as overseeing the overall quality of all the art aspects, I did all the sprite art, battle-mode character art, and all the animations."

Interestingly, *Gaiden* actually started out as an entirely different Capcom game, as Elliot revealed when asked why Capcom chose



MADE IN CHINA

AN INTERESTING LEGACY of *Gaiden* is that it influenced the development of an unofficial, bootleg version of the original *Biohazard* on Nintendo's ageing Famicom – a demake, as some would say. Created by Waixing Computer Science & Technology, it's part of growing number of recently developed Famicom remakes based on popular titles, including games like *Final Fantasy VII*. While the backgrounds appear to be originals based on the first game's Umbrella Mansion, several character sprites and the entire battle system have been copied from *Gaiden*, pixel by pixel, using the Famicom's limited colour palette. You can even move an aiming reticule towards an enemy, just like in the GBC game. Although extremely glitchy under emulation, and entirely in Chinese, this unofficial port is surprisingly fun. More information can be found under the releases tab on: http://qbob.free.fr.

When asked, the M4 team saw the demake as more of a compliment than anything else:
Tim: "First time I saw that. It's flattering to know the work was re-used!"
Elliot: "Yeah, I've not seen that before. Best looking NES game ever!"
Stefan: "I've not seen it, but that is very flattering!"
Kieron: "First I knew about it too. Nice to see some of it lived on!"



M4. "As I recall, we produced a very impressive demo for a GBC version of *Dino Crisis*. *Resident Evil* was already in development as an over-ambitious port from the PlayStation version. This was scrapped and Capcom asked us to do a bespoke game with our *Dino Crisis* engine."

No screenshots have ever appeared for this *Dino Crisis* demo, and we pressed Tim for images and details on why M4 made it. "Capcom had requested Virgin for a *Dino Crisis* demo, Virgin asked us to create it. It used the exploration mode and [similar] battle system as *Gaiden* would use. It was playable. The dino sprites in exploration mode were large. I have entire backups of everything from M4, absolutely everything, but I'm in Brazil and the backups are in the UK."

It would seem that Gaiden came about due to Capcom being not only impressed with M4's demo, but also disappointed with their own overly ambitious, internal GBC development of *Resident Evil*, which was stopped soon after. Elliot explained more, "I don't know if there's any juicy gossip about it. It just wasn't very playable so Capcom cancelled it. Happens all the time. We had seen the first attempt at making *RE* on the GBC. We all laughed – it was the perfect example of how not to make a handheld game. You have to design a game differently for handhelds. It worked well for us I think because Capcom had a shoddy game to compare ours to!"

With M4 officially working on Capcom's new survival-horror, Shinji Mikami, director on the original *RE*, came onboard as an advisor. Hiroki Kato, planner on the first *RE*, is also listed in *Gaiden*'s credits as planner and advisor, though none of the team can recall his input, not even Tim. "No idea. Our Virgin intermediary would have had more knowledge of this." Tim also elaborates on what influence Capcom had. "They gave us the basic storyline, we developed and embellished it. Capcom gave us a mission to create a game of ever increasing tension; we did the rest. Throughout the process we made proposals and Capcom accepted, with some minor but compulsory changes. Like changing the colour of the battle mode windows or adding one or two pixels to a sprite, only to be removed later because they then looked too large. The biggest issues were the scale of the graphics, size of the maps and the combat control system. The GBC dictated most of what was possible though."

Asking Stefan about what kind of assets Capcom provided revealed that the M4 team were mostly left to their own devices. "I remember seeing the crappy first attempt that got canned, but apart from that the art team just went for it." He also describes Capcom's relaxed attitude. "I don't remember there being many restrictions. Speaking for myself, I was given quite a lot of free reign with the sprites and battle mode art.

> **"Resident Evil Gaiden is a perfect deconstruction of something technically more advanced"**



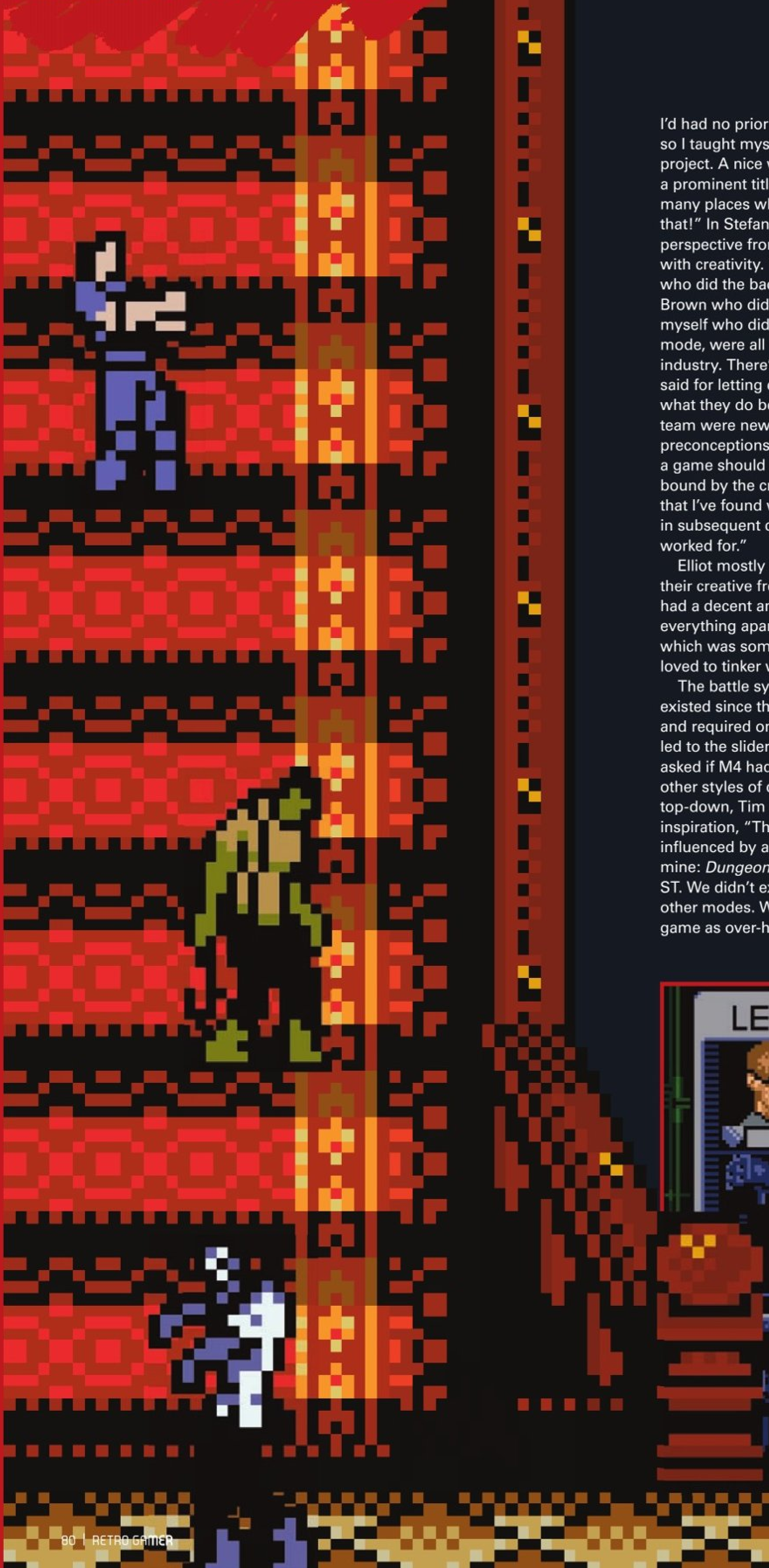




» [Game Boy Color] *Gaiden* features Barry Burton rescuing Leon Kennedy, who goes missing while investigating a cruise-ship transporting a bio-weapon.







I'd had no prior animation experience, so I taught myself throughout the project. A nice way to learn on such a prominent title. I cant think of many places where you'd get to do that!" In Stefan's view, this fresh perspective from the team helped with creativity. "Bruce Silverstone who did the backgrounds, Mark Brown who did the cutscenes, and myself who did sprites and Battle mode, were all newcomers to the industry. There's something to be said for letting creative people do what they do best! Because the art team were newcomers we had no preconceptions of how and what a game should be like. We weren't bound by the creative tunnel vision that I've found with so many artists in subsequent companies I have worked for."

Elliot mostly agrees regarding their creative freedom, "I think we had a decent amount of license on everything apart from the story, which was something I would have loved to tinker with!"

The battle system, of course, had existed since the *Dino Crisis* demo, and required only refinement, which led to the slider-bar mechanic. When asked if M4 had experimented with other styles of combat, such as top-down, Tim reveals a source of inspiration, "The Battle mode was influenced by a personal favourite of mine: *Dungeon Master* for the Atari ST. We didn't experiment with any other modes. We conceived of the game as over-head exploration with first-person combat from the outset. Perhaps that's one reason Capcom chose us. Mikami was particularly impressed with the first-person combat. Once we'd created the first-person demo, the control system for hitting the enemies wasn't too easy though. If I remember right, it was Mikami who wanted the slider bar added. I baulked at the idea at first, but after implementation I could see the reason why: it makes the combat far more tense."

Elliot agrees that the combat had impressed Capcom. "The first-person bits really make the game and looked amazing from the beginning. I agree with Tim – it would have been a deal-breaker, because it does set the game apart and make it something special."

"The design for the game's combat was fairly clear from the outset," explains Kieron. "We just had to make it work. It took a lot of tweaking but we got there. It was a lot of fun and adds urgency and tension to an otherwise fairly relaxed (albeit not easy) game. It also added depth in that it allowed different kinds of hits from the zombies on the player, and vice versa, and different characteristics of the weapons in terms of damage, accuracy, hit effects, splash damage, and so on. Plus, of course, the all-important head shot!"

The final game, even a decade later, is still impressive and well worth playing. The press were unfairly critical of *Gaiden* though, condemning the graphics in





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

BOUNTY HUNTER
SYSTEMS: PC
YEAR: UNRELEASED

SPACE CADETS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: GBA
YEAR: UNRELEASED

STUNTPIGS
SYSTEM: NEXT GEN
YEAR: UNRELEASED

» [Game Boy Color] There's a tremendous amount of diversity in the locations you'll find aboard the Starlight.



» [Game Boy Color] All locations are based on those you'd really find on an actual cruise-ship – this is the duty free.



"Ammunition is limited, giving proceedings an air of desperation – it's Die Hard on a boat with zombies"

comparison to earlier *RE* games, despite it being on 8-bit hardware. Ignore this incompetence of the media though, and you'll find a remarkably thrilling little game with a strong emphasis on survival. *Gaiden* is a perfect deconstruction of something technically more advanced. Ammunition is limited – more so than in any other *RE* title – giving proceedings an air of desperation as you scramble from pantry to gantry clutching a pistol long since emptied; it's like *Die Hard* on a boat with zombies.

Considering the authentic *RE* feeling *Gaiden* conveys, it's perhaps surprising not everyone had played *RE*. "Tim and James lent me a PlayStation after I was offered the job," admits Stefan. "I was told to go home and play *RE* for a week before starting! I wasn't a huge fan – it was a bit slow. I much preferred our version!" Kieron meanwhile was more of a PC gamer, "I didn't have a console so hadn't played any *RE* games until then. At that time I was mostly into things like *Civilization* and *Shogun: Total War*."

For Tim, the authenticity was a result of working so closely with series originator Mikami. "The strengths of the *RE* series that you enjoy, especially where it relates to survival-horror, were very much driven by Mikami's personal direction. The *RE* titles that lack this notion of increasing desperation probably had less involvement from Mikami and suffered as a consequence. We were lucky enough to have Mikami's attention. There were times when we were perplexed at his decisions, but his purist approach and our dedication to fulfilling the brief really did give the game its fear factor."

As for the negative press, Tim felt it was due to the hardware restrictions. As it turned out, *Gaiden* was almost a GBA title. "If I was an *RE* fan and I wanted to play it on the move, I'd have expected it on GBA. We pressed Capcom to allow us to create it on GBA instead, but they weren't interested at the time. We even did some beautiful GBA demo graphics – it looked fantastic! However, the money men (publishers) at both Virgin and Capcom could not find a way to move in that direction. GBA was only considered very late into development, so costs for re-drawing all the graphics and extending the scope of the title would have put strain on the publishers' margins. Nintendo gave next to no margin on those cartridges as it was, so for a publisher it becomes a loss-leader. In the end Capcom were disappointed that the title had not been developed for GBA. This is where development and politics between publishers like Virgin Interactive collide."

"Ah, bloody cartridges!" adds Elliot. "Every project we did was compromised because of the price of cartridges. As developers we wanted *RE* to be a GBA title. We weren't interested in sales or margins. We just wanted to make the game as good as possible."

After *Gaiden*'s release M4 had a shot at a GBA title with *Mission: Impossible*, which in some ways resembles *Gaiden* and hints at what could have been. Despite good intentions, however, M4 closed in 2002, leaving three titles unpublished. Elliot expands on these, "*Bounty Hunter* (PC) really was stunning. As for *Stuntpigs* (Next Gen) – it was the best game never made. *Space Cadets* (GBA) was actually completed, but it was different ,and generally publishers don't like to risk money on original stuff, especially when there's cartridges to pay for." Kieron agrees: "Stuntpigs had frantic gameplay, some dark humour and loads of destruction. Way ahead of its time and beyond the scope of publishers to realise. Shame!"

Although the team disbanded it's clear they had a lot of talent – *Gaiden* is testament to this – and it's a shame M4 was never given a fair shot. Tim reflected on the closure, "We finally threw in the towel because we couldn't sell our original titles to publishers and that was the whole reason for starting our own business in the first place. I then got on my motorcycle and started going around the world making my little films about indigenous games. Sadly no original M4 titles made it to the shelves. *Space Cadets* and *Stuntpigs* are still held by us in a dormant company though. Who knows; maybe one day they will rise."

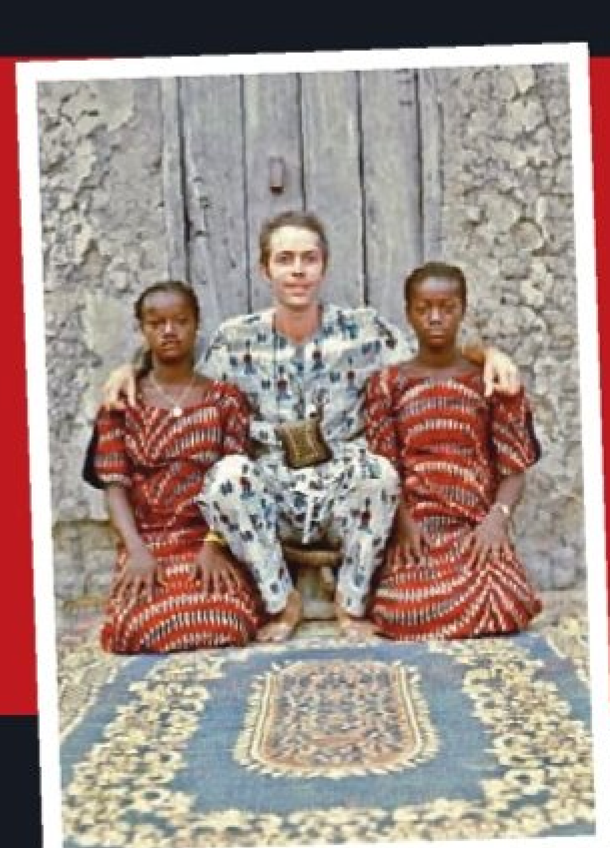
» [Game Boy Color] Throughout the game, cut-scenes explain the story, complete with twists, McGuffins and red-herrings.



GLOBALTIMOTO

ALTHOUGH NOT RELATED to *Resident Evil Gaiden*, or indeed even videogames, we're sure that anyone who enjoyed Global Gaming will be interested in what Tim Hull worked on after closing M4. As his website Globaltimoto.com proclaims: 'One man, on a motorcycle, around the world, in a quest for gameplay. Searching for games that tell us about our history, culture and psyche. Revealing stories of the greatest games ever conceived and why they are still with us today.'

The results are impressive, featuring Tim's videos and photos from across Europe, Africa and, soon to be added, South America. In these he details all manner of games that children and adults play, from tribal dancing and wrestling, to board games made from mounds of sand and racing with home-made toy cars. It's a delightful collection with serious anthropological value, showing that human beings the world over, despite cultural differences, all enjoy playing.



THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home





IN DEPTH

» One of *64th Street*'s 'things' was that it was possible for players to throw enemies at the back walls of the stage to create real-time damage or to remove them completely.

» The game features some impressively cheap bosses that all get recycled later on. This, of course, just makes them doubly cheap.

» We're no David Starkey, but the fashions and enemies in the game seem wildly out of place. Orange jeans and a purple shirt with matching purple shoes? Was purple even around in the Thirties?

64TH STREET: A DETECTIVE STORY

■ **Developer:** Jaleco ■ **Year:** 1991 ■ **Genre:** Beat-'em-up

■ **As side-scrolling fighters became popular, some developers tried to differentiate theirs and attract players by setting them in all kinds of weird scenarios. Last month we took a look at *Night Slashers*, a side-scrolling brawler by Data East with a schlock horror theme. This month it's Jaleco's *64th Street*, a fighting game with an interesting gumshoeing-meets-steampunk premise. Next month we'll attempt to find a game that mixes dentistry with Jeet Kune Do.**

64th Street's plot finds two chalk-and-cheese detectives – Rick, an experienced private eye with the head of Freddie Mercury and the dress sense of Timmy Mallett; and his younger, cooler partner Allen – who are on the case to rescue the kidnapped daughter of a 'rich man'.

After a ridiculous preamble cinematic that shows Allen discovering that the criminals responsible for the kidnapping have been using coded classified adverts in newspapers as a convoluted means to communicate with one another, the pair jump into action, embarking on a mission that sees them fighting crooks on the mean streets, inside a moving bus, and inside a mob building of operations, before the case is closed following a climactic fight inside a zeppelin.

While *64th Street* dares to do something a little inventive with its detective theme, sadly the game is pretty forgettable. The combat is solid enough, especially thanks to the novel ability to toss enemies at the walls to damage the level, but the gameplay becomes monotonous fairly quickly.

The enemies, for instance, are all stereotypical beat-'em-up fodder, comprising a mix of Eighties thugs in bombastic outfits and your typical oddballs such as wrestlers, hunched men with Freddy Krueger gloves, and ninjas, all of which feel wildly out of place in the Thirties era that the game tells us it's set in. The bosses are strange too: a goofy pirate, a giant man wearing evening wear, a pool shark, and something that looks like Robin Williams in *Bicentennial Man*. The detective theme is also squandered, limited to pick-ups in the form of books, pipes and pens.

Given the popularity of the genre, it is strange that *64th Street* was never brought home. Having said that, it heavily influenced Jaleco's *Rushing Beat* trilogy, which appeared on the SNES.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

FINAL FIGHT 1989

64th Street's closest contemporary is certainly *Rushing Beat* (*Rival Turf* in the West), but as that game didn't originate in arcades we have therefore opted for *Final Fight* instead. Jaleco was clearly trying to put its own spin on Capcom's seminal smash.

4-D WARRIORS

■ **Developer:** Coreland ■ **Year:** 1985 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up



» [Arcade] The beauty of writing this feature is that occasionally you find a lost gem, such as *4-D Warriors*.

■ **This unconverted title** from early Banpresto (Coreland at the time of the game's release) is a decent side-scrolling jetpack shoot-'em-up, similar to Capcom's *Section Z* and *Forgotten Worlds*.

4-D Warriors finds players taking on the role of a robot frozen in a permanent Michael Jackson pose that has the ability to hop between two different dimensions – hence the '4-D' in the title.

Though it sounds ambitious, the gameplay is actually pretty simple, with the dimension-hopping used subtly. Each stage is linear and finds you blasting away a series of hideous aliens by switching them between the two dimensions: a red zone with zero gravity, and a blue zone that will slowly pull your player towards terra firma. As you hunt your target through these two spaces, which you switch to by simply hopping over the playing field, you must also vanquish a continual wave of enemy forces.

Though the weapon system does feel like an afterthought, with you blasting gems to access some clumsy-feeling ammo types that are annoying to aim, the action in *4-D Warriors* keeps a decent pace, and there are some imaginative-looking enemies and bosses too.

That it never received home ports surprises us, as we think it's a great little underrated shmup gem.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

SECTION Z 1985

In terms of similarity we opted for *Section Z*, which is another jetpack blaster released in the same year. However, the game was only ever ported to the NES and the Famicom Disk System, and this version differs considerably to its arcade parent.



CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

MOON PATROL 1982

We struggled to think of an alternative to *Pioneer Balloon*, until we discovered *Horizon* and realised that it shares quite a lot with *Moon Patrol*. The action is simply flipped: you're trying to negotiate hazardous terrain destroying air and occasional ground targets.



PIONEER BALLOON

■ **Developer:** SNK ■ **Year:** 1982 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up



» [Arcade] We'd love to know how SNK came up with this idea.

■ **There are very** few games in history that have seen gamers steer a hot air balloon. In fact, we're struggling to name two. One we can do easily, though, thanks to us discovering *Pioneer Balloon*.

Given the game's unusual premise, initially we assumed that it was loosely inspired by the memoirs of Phileas Fogg. However, after reading them, we were shocked to discover only a cursory mention of ballooning in the text.

Well, in actual fact, as its title hints, *Pioneer Balloon* is an early forced-scrolling horizontal shooter from SNK that finds you steering a giant balloon above some hostile terrain in pioneer era America. Full of annoying things that want to pop you out of the sky, including stagecoaches, gorillas, birds and even tornados, your mission is to survive the aerial gauntlet, retaliate by lobbing things that look like proximity mines, and reach the solace of a fort situated at the end of each stage.

With enemy projectiles launched at an almost unavoidable rate and the game having no restart points, at first *Pioneer Balloon* can feel frustratingly challenging. However, do stick with it. With a bit of perseverance we quickly found ourselves becoming better at dodging attacks, edging further in with every replay and finding the game really quite enjoyable.

BEST LEFT IN THE ARCADE

HORIZON

■ **Developer:** Irem ■ **Year:** 1985 ■ **Genre:** Shoot-'em-up

■ **If you're anything** like us, your initial reaction to *Horizon*, a spiritual sequel to *Moon Patrol*, will be one of delight, as you see the game's interesting use of sprite-scaling in action. It sees you manning an armed space rover between three different lanes on the surface of a hostile planet, hopping between the different layers, destroying and evading enemies that fly and drive into view.

Sadly, though, despite getting quite frenetic and challenging at times, the game itself isn't that exciting. Aesthetically it looks bland, and levels seem to go on far too long. You have four 'operations' to complete, and each is divided into six sections. Along the way you get to pick up the most boring power-ups, and when you reach the next operation there seems to be little variety in the look of the enemies.

Horizon is an interesting idea that hasn't been utilised as well as it could have been, but if you're a big fan of *Moon Patrol* you'll probably enjoy it more than most.





RAFFAELE CECCO

"Raf Cecco - worra guy! He's a star, isn't he?" said Your Sinclair a whopping 21 years ago. "It was just young people being stupid all the time," Cecco says today. In an exclusive interview, David Crookes catches up with the rather modest creator of Cybernoid and Stormlord

RAFFAELE CECCO TOOK a gamble mid-way through his A-levels, quitting his studies to work for Mikro-Gen. His first game, *Equinox*, proved to be a breakthrough, firing its way to critical acclaim and breathing fresh life into the shoot-'em-up genre. He went on to produce a glittering array of games for Hewson Consultants including *Exolon*, *Cybernoid*, *Stormlord* and *Deliverance: Stormlord II*. And in the midst of the sexual innuendo and violence that underpinned many of his games, there was thought and humour bringing the titles to life. David Crookes managed to pin him down for a chat

RETRO GAMER: Let's start with your days at school in the 1970s. What were your aspirations back then?

RAFFAELE CECCO: I was always interested in science as a youngster but it was only when I saw a videogame for the first time that I thought, 'Right, that's absolutely what I want to do.' I think it was a Binatone games system, which came with a TV my parents had rented. It was a black-and-white thing, and it had a game of soccer from what I recall. It was very, very basic but that was my first experience with videogames really.

RG: So is that what got you into computing and gaming?

RC: When I found out that to make your own videogames you had to learn how to programme, that's when I started toying with code. Then the Sinclair ZX81 came out, and I think it cost about £70, which was a fair amount of money in those days. But it suddenly wasn't an inconceivable dream to have a computer. All we had prior to that were things like Apple and these really expensive American machines, which cost hundreds and hundreds. When the ZX81 came out it was kind of a way in for youngsters to learn programming quite cheaply.

RG: Did you just dabble with BASIC at first?

RC: Yes, I dabbled with BASIC first on the ZX81. I knew that I had to learn machine code to write really good games, or as good as they could be on the ZX81, but unfortunately I could never get the tape loading and saving working. It kind of held me back a bit until I got the Spectrum, which had the reliable saving, and then I could really save my work and really get into it. I mean there were a few more books available then when the Spectrum came out as well.

RG: So you learnt much of your trade using books?

RC: In those days, the magazines used to have quite big sections on programming and they would kind of dissect commercial games and have an expert telling you how they made this, that and the other in this game, so you used to pick up quite a few tips. But there were a few books starting to come on to the market as well, which was really good, and I just learnt through trial and error.

RG: Did you spend ages tapping in the huge type-in programmes magazines would carry?

RC: I did, yes. I remember once spending all night typing in some machine code programme and it just crashed. I would get all kinds of error messages, so I learnt my lesson the hard way there.

RG: What if games didn't exist? What do you think you'd have done with your life?

RC: It would still have been something involved in technology and computing or engineering in general, I think – something along those lines.

RG: Did writing games interest you more than actually playing them did?

RC: Yes, but I did enjoy playing them too. I think the two went hand-in-hand because I found some games quite addictive and I wanted to replicate that in my own games. I thrashed my Atari 2600 to bits playing things like *Combat* and *Space Invaders* with the hundred variations as it was on that game, so yes, I found the games very, very addictive. It was only later on in



"I told one chap that I developed videogames and he asked me if that was legal"

SELECTED TIMELINE

Cop Out 1986
Equinox 1986
Exolon 1987
Cybernoid: The Fighting Machine 1988
Cybernoid II: The Revenge 1988
Stormlord 1989
Deliverance: Stormlord II 1990
First Samurai 1991
Second Samurai 1993
Street Racer 1994
Touche: The Adventures Of The Fifth Musketeer 1995
Agent Armstrong 1997
Invasion From Beyond 1998
Galaga: Destination Earth 2000

In the chair with...

life when I'd been programming for 20 years or so that I kind of got fed up with games, and I don't even play them anymore. But, yes, they were very addictive to play. I loved games on the SNES – *Mario*, and *Zelda* and all those types of things.

RG: So how did you go about creating your first game?

RC: The very first game that I actually wrote was in BASIC. It was just a few things like characters dropping from the top of the screen down to the bottom and you had to move left to right to avoid them. It was only when I got to Mikro-Gen that I really started understanding how to put a game together, and began to get to grips with gameplay and levels and all that type of thing. Before that it was just generally hacking demos together that weren't really complete games as such, but they gave me enough of a grounding to actually develop a full game after that.

RG: You went to Mikro Gen while you were still at school, didn't you?

RC: I was doing my A-levels at school and I basically got completely fed up with doing them so I started sending a few game demos out to about three or four companies. Mikro-Gen asked me in for an interview. I got offered the job and I thought, 'Right, I'll quit school and I'll start working.'

RG: How did that go down with your parents?

RC: They didn't mind. They were pleased that I'd got a job that I was going to enjoy. At the time, it was still touch-and-go as to whether I was going to finish my A-levels anyway, and I didn't really know if I wanted to go to university or anything like that. When the opportunity came up I thought, right, okay I'll go for that.

RG: Was there any real stigma in working within the games industry at that time then?

RC: I'd say there was, because a lot of people had no idea what games were really. I remember one chap asking me what I did for a living. I said I developed videogames and he

*AVE TO PLAY

CYBERNOID: THE FIGHTING MACHINE



CYBERNOID WAS CECCO'S second game for Hewson Consultants and it was a cracking example of what the talented developer was capable of. Players had to guide the Cybernoid ship around a series of flick-screen rooms, shooting at pirates, gathering power-ups and trying to retrieve treasure that could be taken into storage. *Your Sinclair* rather amusingly called it *Miner Willy Meets Some Aliens Just As The Sun Crosses The Equator*, saying it took the best features from *Manic Miner*, *Equinox*, *Zynaps* and *Exolon*. It made for a fantastic mix of gameplay, of that there is no doubt, and again the fun came not in the game's speed, graphics or shooting, but the tactics needed to progress. Indeed, pixel perfect timing was required for many sections of the game, meaning that you'd need to have agility, as well as a quick trigger finger to see *Cybernoid's* end. It was followed by an enjoyable sequel later that same year.

EXOLON



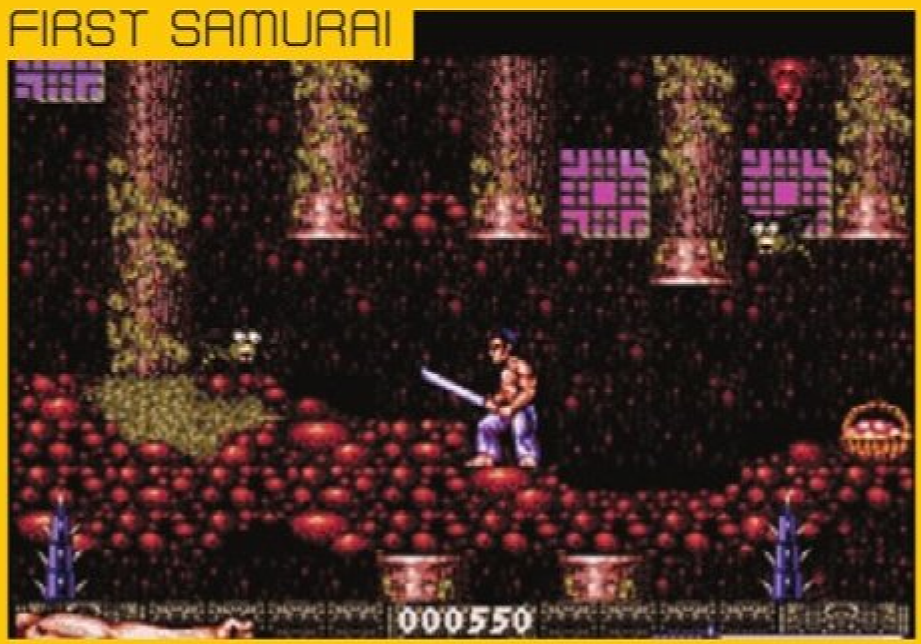
TAKING THE SHOOT-'EM-UP and ruffling its feathers somewhat, *Exolon* dispensed with the never-ending waves of enemies so beloved of many a programmer and introduced a level of strategy. The hero plodded around on foot with the player, making key decisions as to the best path he should take. Teleports enabled the character to move between walkways and the ground, and there was a gambling element which meant you had to live with the choices you made. It astounded Spectrum owners with its colourful and highly-detailed graphics, and it was a game that was simple to understand yet difficult to put down.

STORMLORD



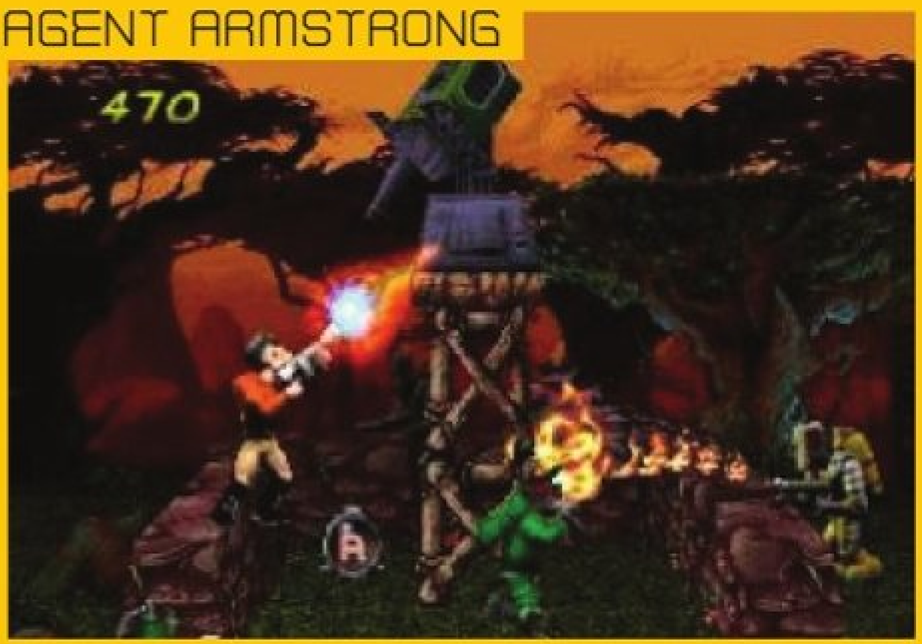
WHILE MUSICIANS MAY struggle with their 'difficult third album', it proved not to be true when it came to gaming or, more specifically, Cecco's unveiling of *Stormlord*, his latest fresh IP. An enthusiastic crowd applauded him for his hat-trick of Hewson excellence in taking yet another simple concept and injecting a healthy dose of the addictive originality that made gaming back in the 1980s such an exciting and innovative pastime. The expected high-end graphics married with superlative, complementary sound lifted a game that, despite being a tale involving fairies, was utterly real in its brilliance. It perfected the platform-based arcade shooter.

FIRST SAMURAI



DOING FOR THE beat-'em-up what *Exolon* did for the shoot-'em-up, *First Samurai* was a riff on *The Last Ninja*. It exploded on to home computers with eye-catching graphics and involved gameplay that had players concentrating on perfecting their joystick work – it was quite a feat to be able to keep the interest of the head-to-head battles over the ten huge levels which made up the game. *First Samurai* was a title that instilled doubt in the mind of the player and questioned their abilities, and so the ensuing fights were naturally epic. It felt like a chore at times, but that made a strategic, methodical win all the more gratifying.

AGENT ARMSTRONG



LAUNCHED IN 1997, *Agent Armstrong* credited Cecco as the lead designer, lead programmer and even listed him as providing the game's vocals. However, its 30 levels didn't reach the same heights as his other games, and there was less of a groundbreaking feel to this PlayStation effort than with his earlier, acclaimed titles. The shooting and power-up elements felt rather tired, though that's not to suggest the game bombed – it reviewed rather well and sold accordingly. Overall, being unable to run and gun at the same time was a disappointment, but not as much as having expectation of a Cecco classic dashed.

asked me if that was legal. I don't know what he thought I was actually doing but there was real ignorance in those days as to what games were and what was involved in developing them. People had no idea really. I knew what was going on, so that was enough for me.

RG: Do you think that attitude has changed over time?

RC: Yes. I think there's still a bit of a stigma attached and, you know, if your kid turns round and says, 'Right, I want to design games for a living,' initially people may think, 'Well, you know, that's not a real job.' They don't know what's involved, especially in a modern game. It's a huge undertaking both technically and creatively these days. There's huge financial risk so it's a very serious business. But I think there still is a bit of a stigma attached to games. I think it's just like now when I look at people wasting all their time on Facebook, I have that attitude towards them. Do you know what I'm saying? If you're involved in something, people are just ignorant of it and you just assume it's not something that is a really valid way of making a living.

RG: Let's talk about your first commercial game, *Equinox*. You had a lot of freedom creating that game, didn't you?

RC: Yes. Basically, the guys who worked there, the programmers, had pretty much complete freedom to do what they wanted. It's public commercial suicide to do that now, but in those days it was just accepted that you joined the company, you came up with ideas, you drew some graphics and you got on with programming the games, designing the games. It was simple as that really. There weren't huge committees and massive meetings about everything. You just kind of got on with it, basically.

RG: What was it like day-to-day?

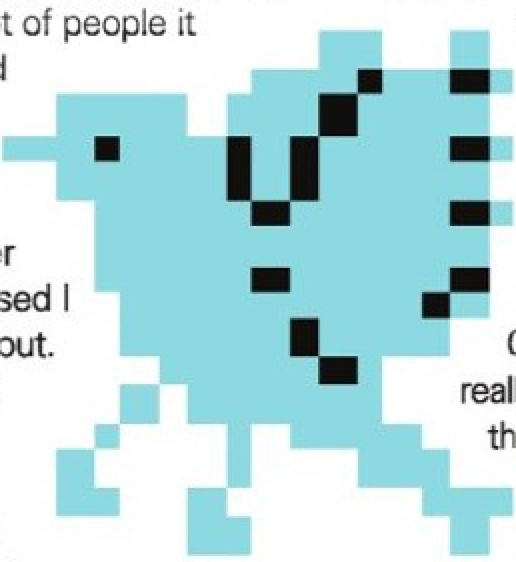
RC: I wasn't hugely experienced in actually programming games when I first started so it was a learning process for me. I'd done little bits of demos and all that sort of thing, but putting together an entire game wasn't something I had done when I joined Mikro-Gen. That's where I learnt a lot from Chris Hinsley. In fact, everybody at Mikro-Gen learnt a lot from Chris because he was the most experienced programmer there. He was a really, really good programmer and a great guy to work with.



RG: Were you upset that Equinox just missed being a *Crash* Smash (it got 87%)?

> "I remember spending all night typing in some machine code programme and it just crashed"

RC: I remember it got pretty good reviews. But, you know, having your first game released in the shops is quite thrilling when you're 17 or 18 years old. I had something tangible in my hand that I could wave at people and say, 'Look, this is what I've done', and so then for a lot of people it clicked. They would then understand what I was doing. A *Crash* Smash didn't bother me. I was just pleased I had my first game out.



RG: What do you think was so special about *Equinox* and why do you think it got those good reviews?

RC: I think it was a well thought-out game. I mean, technically it was nothing special, but it was reasonably addictive to play. To be quite honest, a lot of that was down to Chris because he helped me a lot with the design initially. It was just a nice simple game to play and it was a neat, nicely put together game. I suppose my graphics were pretty good. I was pretty good at drawing graphics. I'm not an artist by any means, but Spectrum-type graphics I was pretty good at. As soon as there were a lot more colours and more memory available then that's when we had to use proper artists.

RG: How comfortable did you feel working with machines other than the Spectrum?

RC: The only machine I really programmed in the early days was the Spectrum, although I did the Amstrad conversions as well because they used the same micro processor, so it wasn't a huge amount of work to get the Spectrum games working on the Amstrad. Nick Jones used to do all my conversions on the Commodore 64. He used to really push that machine and get the best out of them.

RG: After finishing *Equinox*, Hewson Consultants published your next batch of games including *Cybernoid, Stormlord* and *Deliverance*...

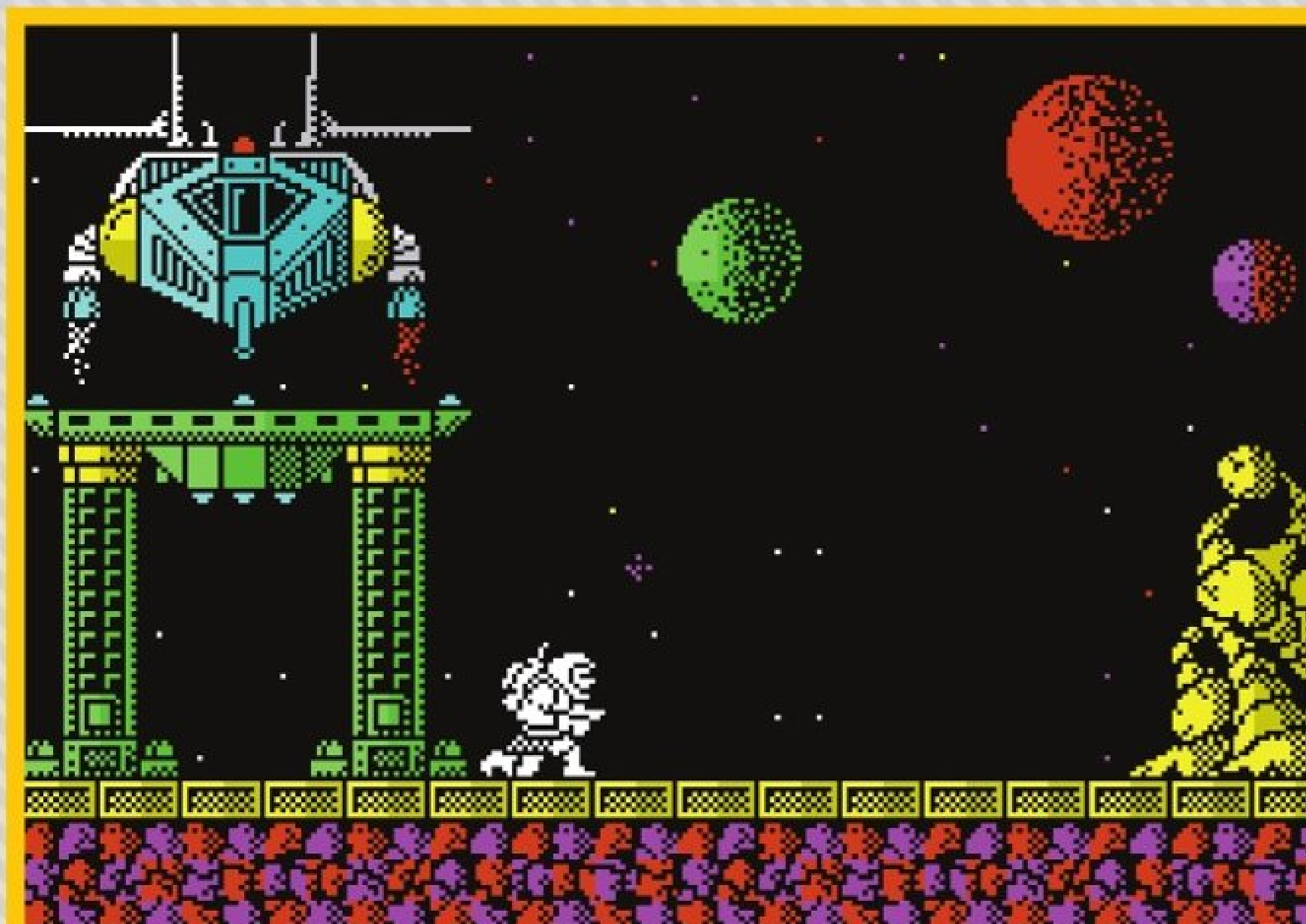
RC: That's right. You know, *Exolon* was just a man running around in a shoot-'em-up, basically. There wasn't a huge amount of design that went into that really. It was just a guy with a rocket that came out of his back and the teleporter. It had nice touches and all. But I think *Cybernoid* was the one where I'd been taught about how everything worked together in terms of collisions, the textures and expecting to be pixel-perfect with things when people were playing the game, and so on.

RG: There was something of a space theme running through these early games...

RC: The fact that *Cybernoid* was a space game was pretty irrelevant. Really, it was a way of putting together some game constructs in terms of how you interacted with the objects. I remember putting a lot of thought into *Cybernoid*, into the design of the levels and all that sort of thing. I think it was quite an addictive game to play – probably a bit hard. I know it was very hard, in fact. I suppose there were no game testers in those days. The programmer would develop it over nine months or so, and by the end of the nine months you'd be absolutely brilliant at the game, but anyone else picking it up for the first time would think, 'Jesus, I can't play this. It's too hard.' But that was the way it was in those days.

RG: *Cybernoid* was very well received, and was praised for its graphics and animation. How important were graphics?

RC: When people see a nice big explosion or something like the volcano in *Cybernoid* or the trail that came out of his rocket when he launched it from his backpack in *Exolon*, it really catches their attention. But I don't think it was the be-all and end-all of the games I made. It was just kind of like now, you know. You can disguise things so much with decent graphics, but if the game's not fun to play people soon spot that. But graphics were important. Remember in those days, during the days of *Cybernoid*, people were coming up with new techniques all the time and pushing the Spectrum as far as possible. So whenever there was a new effect or something, people were quite impressed by it.



RG: Is that what made that period of time so exciting, just seeing all the continuing innovation?
RC: You had this constant sense of discovery. Of course, you didn't have the internet, whereas nowadays if you have a problem with programming something or you want to find out how to do something you just type it into Google and generally you'll find the answer within half an hour. In those days it was a lot more difficult than that, you know. You'd speak to people or you'd have to work out a lot of things yourself as well. Certainly, there's still a lot of work involved, I'm sure, in creating modern games, but everything is a lot better documented and there are a lot more tools. A lot of the really hard stuff I think has been done in terms of all the physics and maths, and all that sort of thing. I'm sure it's still a lot of fun, though.
RG: *Cybernoid* was called the best shoot-'em-up on the Spectrum. Are you proud of that?
RC: Oh yes. I mean, whenever one of our games got well received it was certainly a proud moment. Certainly towards the end of development you lost all sense of what the game was like really, because you'd become so desensitised to what the game was like. So it was quite nice at the end when people start writing good reviews. It made you think it was worth all the hard work.
RG: The music within your games was awesome. Did you have a hand in any of it?
RC: No, but the guys who produced it did incredibly well. The *Cybernoid* music on the Commodore 64 was really quite famous. I know there have been classical versions of it and all sorts. Nick Jones was an accomplished pianist and appreciated how good the music was on the Commodore. Dave Rogers did some really catchy tunes on the Spectrum.
RG: Who was your favourite videogame musician at the time, or were they all equally as good?
RC: Maniacs of Noise on the Commodore 64 did brilliant stuff. It was always quite exciting when you used to slot the music and sound effects to the game because it would really bring the game alive.
RG: You once said you admired Ultimate co-founder Tim Stamper, didn't you?
RC: Yes, I mean Ultimate did some incredible stuff. They always seemed to be a couple of years ahead of everyone else. They were involved in Japanese software so I think they probably had access to better ideas and technology, and things like that. But, yeah, they were certainly way ahead of their time.
RG: Do you think when you look back it's a shame that we're losing the recognition of individuals and now it's more big team efforts?
RC: It's an odd one. I've been asked this before and, as you say, it's a massive team effort nowadays to create a game. It's not like a film where you obviously can focus on the actors. Videogames are definitely art, but they're not performance art. It's programmers and artists, and you're missing that rock star type of person that the people can identify with. I don't really think that's ever going to change, you know. I think there have been a few attempts to try and really push people to the fore of the kind of public perception, but it's not a performance art, so you're just never going to have personalities that kind of transcend the industry and move into that kind of mainstream, I don't think.

> "Videogames are art, but not performance art. You're missing that rock star type of person"

RG: When you worked at Hewson and Mikro-Gen did you feel that you were being projected as an individual rather than just a cog in a large wheel?
RC: Yes, a bit. Hewson once asked me if I'd be interested in writing a column for *Crash* magazine – it was their idea and all part of the publicity machine for the actual videogames. It worked well because basically for nine months, or whatever it was, they were getting two or three pages of free coverage every single month.
RG: The *Crash* column really helped your profile. Did you feel that you were starting to become recognised then?
RC: Yes, I did, and I got recognised a few times when I was out and about, which was quite nice, but again it was only from people that played games and knew about games. It was nice but in my mind I knew it was just a transient thing. It wasn't really going to last. It was just part and parcel of making the games, really. So, yes, it never really went to my head, I don't think, because I knew it wouldn't last forever. It was just a bit of a novelty when it was going on.
RG: Do you consider yourself lucky to have had such a glowing career right from an early age?
RC: Yes, yes, it was. I mean, just doing what you want at that age, because normally you're saying I have to go to college and then university and decide what I want to do, but I knew what I wanted to do and I'd started doing it at a very young age, so it was brilliant being able to do that.



» [Amstrad] One of the hallmarks of Cecco's games was the brilliant graphics.

*NUMBER CRUNCHING

Cecco was born in **1967**, on 10 May.

Cecco had **one** brother who loved games and one sister who didn't.

He would later battle with his brother for supremacy in *Street Fighter **II***.

Cecco left school with **zero** A-levels having abandoned his studies to write games.

He joined Mikro-Gen as a programmer when he was just **17**.

And he stayed there for **one** year before working for Hewson Consultants.

Crash magazine awarded his first Mikro-Gen game, *Equinox*, **87** per cent.

Amstrad Action gave the Hewson classic *Stormlord* away on a cover-mounted tape, but had to cover the fairies' **two** bare breasts.

A revamped version of *First Samuari* was to be released for the Nintendo **64** but was canned.

He made games for the PS**one** including *Galaga: Destination Earth* and *Agent Armstrong*.

RG: Do you think being young gave you an advantage in any way?

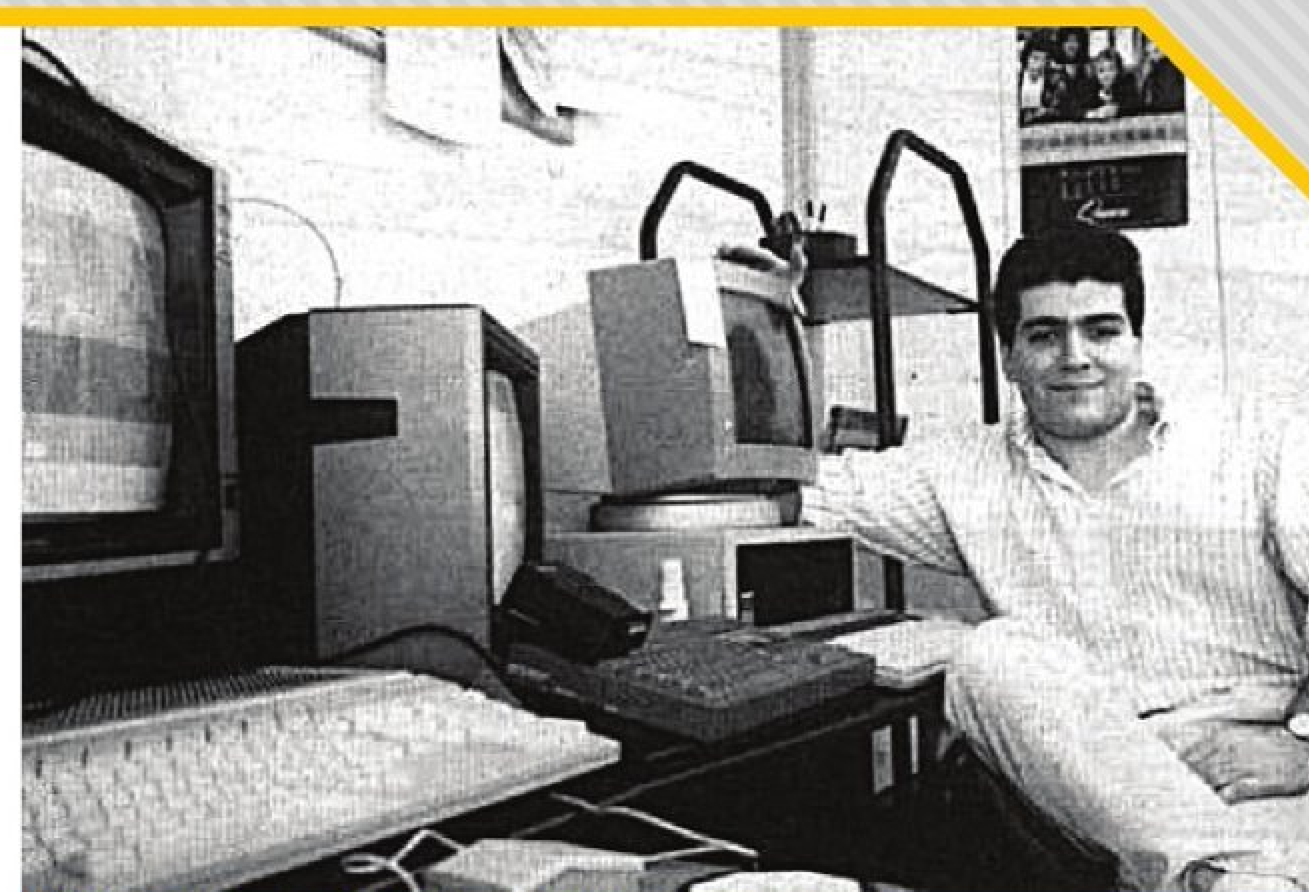
RC: It's difficult to say. I think one advantage you do have when you're very young is you don't have many responsibilities beyond working on the games. The chances are you won't be married with kids and have a mortgage to pay and all that sort of thing, so there are certain advantages to being that young that lets you really focus. You're just not worried about having to go home at a certain time or have other responsibilities.

RG: Have you ever found yourself becoming jaded by games?

RC: Definitely. And as I grew older, I got completely fed up with games. I still don't play games myself. It's something I've grown out of. I'm 44 years old now. I'll play around a bit on the PlayStation or something with my little girl, but I don't go out of my way to play games and I just can't imagine sitting there for three hours playing a videogame anymore, whereas I used to do that quite often when I was young. But, having said that, as far as programming goes, I still love programming, whether it's web development or mobile. There's always something new to learn in programming, so it's very exciting still.

RG: When you look back on some of your games like *Cybernoid, Cybernoid II* and *Stormlord*, there was a bit of a sexual thing going on – sex-based cheat modes and, famously, bare breasts on the fairies in *Stormlord*. What do you think prompted it?





» A young Cecco looks confident as he embarks on his new programming career.

RC: That was just me being a cheeky sod basically and seeing what I could get away with. I remember once that a magazine wanted a bit of a press release for one of our games so I just wrote something that was full of sexual innuendo and sent it to Hewson assuming that they'd read it and they'd not pass it onto the magazine. It was just a bit of a joke, But unfortunately they just passed it onto the magazine and it actually published this press release that was full of sexual innuendo, and it was just like, 'Oh my God.' When I think back, particularly at Mikro-Gen, it was just young people being stupid all the time. I'm surprised we ever got anything done in those days. We were just mucking around. But it was great fun, certainly.

RG: So it wasn't an attempt to sell more games?

RC: Well, I think in those days sexualisation was a lot more blatant. I don't know if you remember a game called *Barbarian*. It was really tacky, Eighties, you know – big hair and bikinis, and all page three girls and all that sort of thing – so it was all part of that kind of environment, I think.

RG: Where did the influence come for *First Samurai*?

RC: That was actually a project that was kicked off by someone else who had let them down in terms of finishing the design off. I took over, basically. It reviewed very well, but unfortunately if you remember at the time Mirrorsoft was the publisher and, literally, the day the game was released, Robert Maxwell had jumped off his boat or something and it caused all sorts of problems. It didn't sell as many copies as we'd hoped.

RG: Of all your games, which one would you say stood out for you?

RC: It's difficult to pick just one really, but I'd probably say *Cybernoid* because it was nice to see it all work as I'd hoped and be as addictive as I'd hoped at the end. That plan came off quite well for *Cybernoid*. I think *First Samurai* was really good and it had a really unusual control system with the sword, but then that was my first 16-bit game as well, so that was quite exciting to be working on that.

RG: What do you think the hallmark of your games is?

RC: 'I don't know' is the answer to that. I think possibly some of the thought that went into just focusing on very specific small parts of the game just to create an addictive interlude

in the levels, that sort of thing. It was just the amount of thought that went into designing parts of the games. You know, most of them tended to have nice graphics. That would be another hallmark. I don't know really. It's difficult to put my finger on.

RG: Would you have done anything different to any of those games, looking back?

RC: No, they were all perfect so I wouldn't change any of them [laughs]. I'm joking. I don't know. I mean, time was always an issue. Towards the end you'd always be a bit rushed and you couldn't have quite as many levels as you wanted or you couldn't implement those x, y and z ideas that you'd had. Having a bit more time would have been nice; maybe another three months to put some extra bits and bobs that maybe you had to forget about because of the time constraints. That would have been nice.

RG: But who was rushing you? Was it the publisher thinking, 'Right, we need to get this out'?

RC: Well, yes. I mean, when you start a project you'll agree a timescale. In those days it used to be between six months and a year. As you moved onto 16-bit they'd take a bit longer, and so on. You'd agree a timescale at the beginning and you'd be under contract, and obviously the publisher is having to make all its marketing plans and it is getting things sorted out with the duplicators and things. Being late for a publisher is a very expensive and disastrous thing to happen, so you have to be sure that a game is never too late because it's all money at the end of the day.

RG: Did you ever start any games and then give up on them?

RC: There was a game that King of the Jungle was working on. It was codenamed *Explosion Royale* and it was a bit like *Metal Slug* but it was all in 3D with these really squat-looking characters that could jump into tanks and slide planes. It was a great concept and it looked brilliant, but unfortunately at the time the industry was going through a real bad patch and publishers were not taking on original products. Unfortunately, we couldn't find a publisher for it. We just couldn't get an original product signed up. It was a pity because we'd done quite a bit of work on it and it certainly looked very nice.

RG: So what happened to that game in the end?

RC: Nothing. It just got shelved. I don't know what's happened to all the assets and graphics and things. I might have them on my hard drive somewhere but I don't know really. It was for the PlayStation 2 and PC but it just got shelved and that was it.

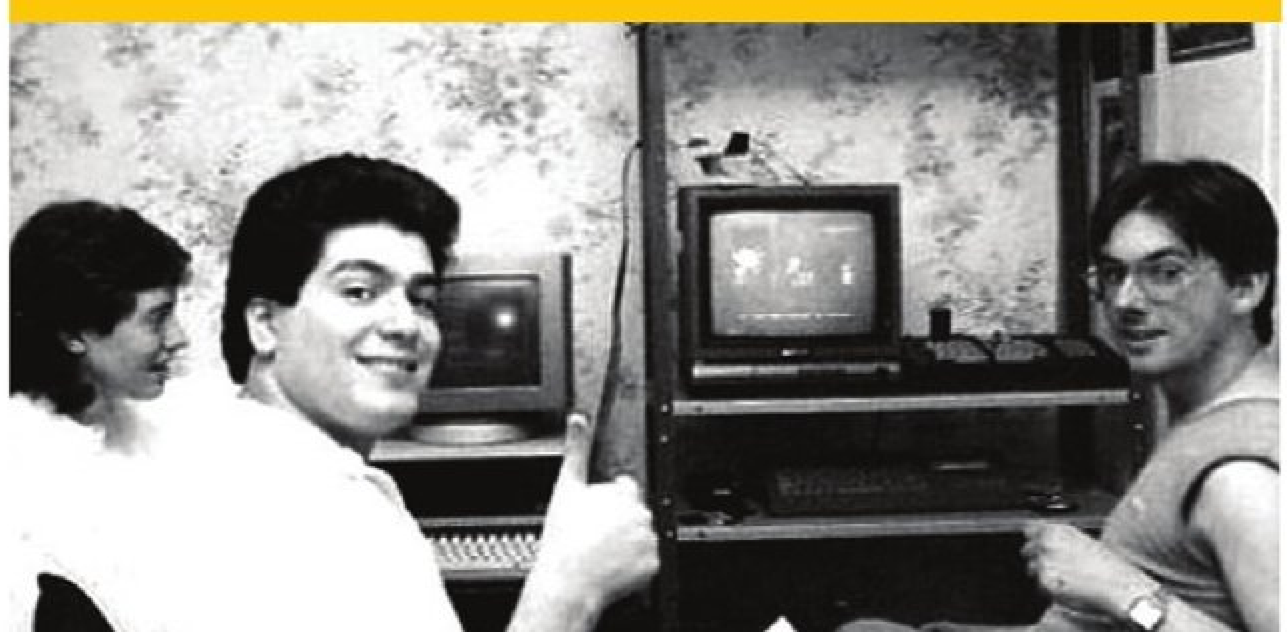
RG: So what was the last game you created?

RC: That I created personally? Well, the last game that I worked on as the main programmer was *Galaga: Destination Earth*. It was a PSone game.

RG: Was it tricky moving on to the PlayStation then?

RC: Yes. I mean, for a start we had to use a programming language on the PlayStation, which was quite alien because prior to that we'd done everything in machine code. All of a sudden to be using a high level language was quite strange. Obviously, there was a huge jump from 2D to 3D. That was a real watershed moment in the games industry and I think all the developments that have been since then have been very small incremental developments like improved graphics, and better AI and stuff like that. I don't quite know what the next big change is going to be in games. The PlayStation was a lot more complicated. There were more things to think about when programming, and it was more difficult to create graphical assets because it was 3D. It was a big change.

> "I'm thinking about doing some games for Android, just to see how it goes"



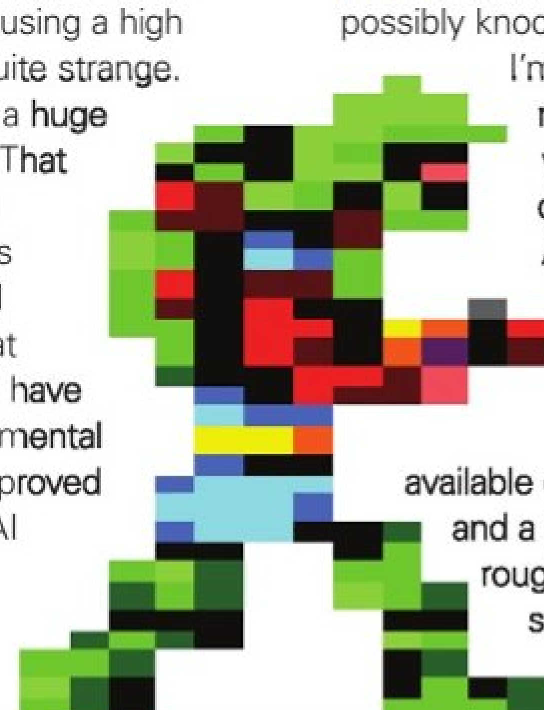
» Raffaele Cecco (second from left) gives a thumbs up in the Mikro-Gen office with Nick Jones and Hugh Binns.

RG: Do you think the 8-bits were more pure then, simply in terms of the programming?

RC: I think so. You didn't have as much scope for mucking around with graphics and there was no real 3D, as such. Yes, they were a lot more pure and simple in terms of creating something playable on them, which obviously has kind of gone full circle because now people like playing those sorts of games on their mobile phones, so it's quite nice that there's almost a kind of renaissance of the sort of simpler quick games that people could play on their phones. It's good to see that.

RG: Would you ever consider porting your earlier games onto a mobile platform like the iPhone, for instance?

RC: I'm seriously thinking about possibly knocking up a game this year. I'm too busy to do it at the moment but later on this year I'm thinking about doing some games for Android, possibly, just to see how it goes, because I've checked out quite a few of the games that are available on these mobile devices and a lot of them are very roughly hacked together, so I think there's a bit of scope for creating something quite nice, you know, some nice simple physics and things like that. So, yes, I'll be looking at that this year hopefully.



RG: Do you think we're seeing a shift back to the days of the bedroom programmers, with portable devices like the iPhone and Android?

RC: Definitely. I was thinking about how it is now possible for someone at home by themselves to write a game. You buy yourself a cheap Android phone and all the development stuff is free. You can download Google and you can write, name and get it published. I think you have to pay $99 or something to get a game published on the App Store and that's it, but certainly for Android it's very simple for someone to start writing their own products, which is great.

RG: If you could give these new indies one piece of advice in terms of creating a classic game, what would you say?

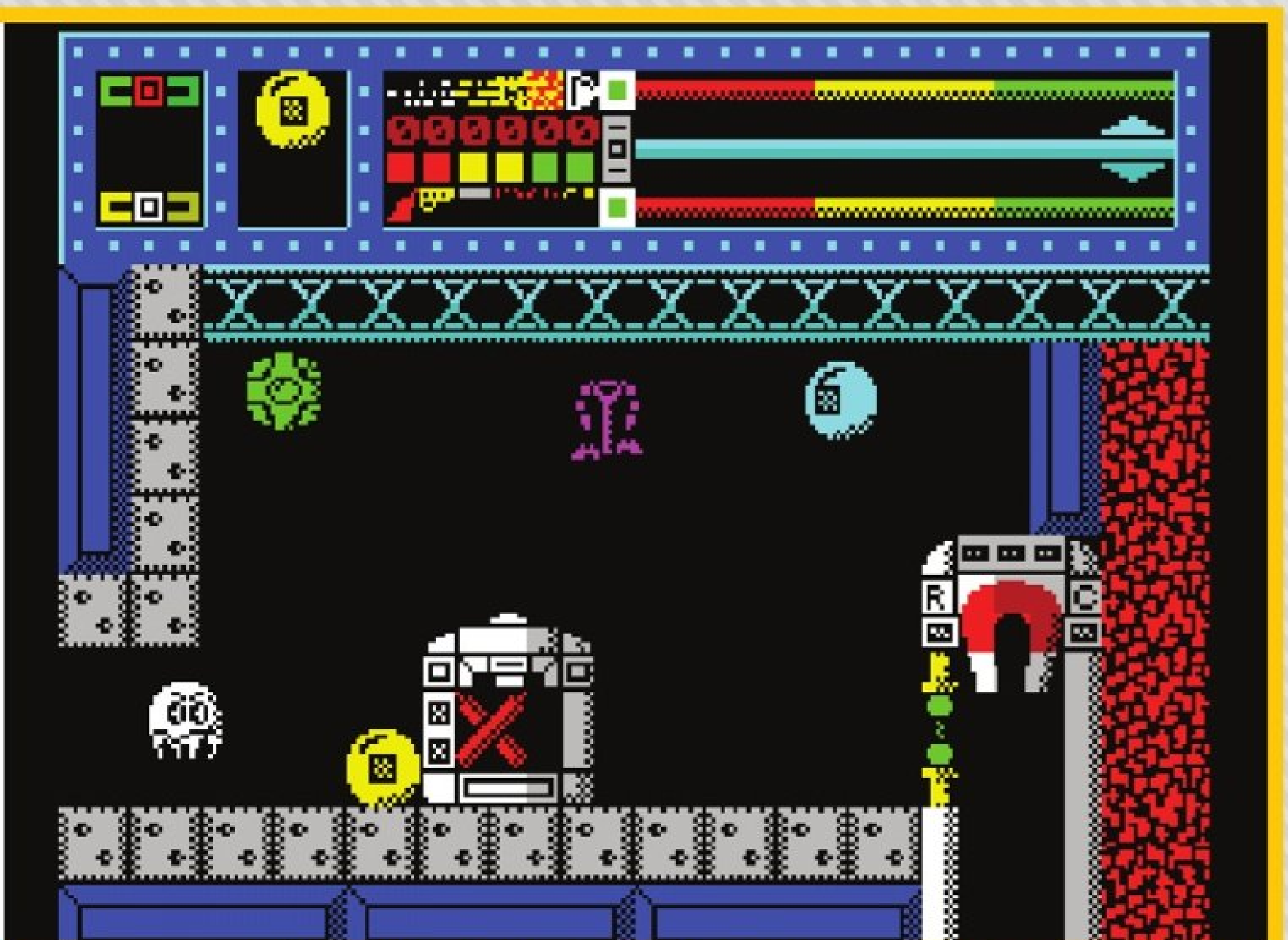
RC: Think about the gameplay first and come up with a really good gameplay mechanic – even if it's just with blobs initially. You don't even have to have a theme in your mind to begin with. Whether it's just simple physics or just a gameplay mechanic that works really well, use the features that are available on a typical modern phone and just take it from there. If something is addictive to control and manipulate then it will probably make a good game.

RG: Did you used to plan your games out thoroughly or did you just crack on with them?

RC: I don't know. It's probably about 60 to 70 per cent planned out and the remainder was kind of things you picked up as you went along, I would say.

RG: When you look back over your entire career in creating videogames, do you have any lingering regrets at all?

RC: Yes, I probably didn't make as much money as I should have done, being a youngster at the time. But apart from that, no; I don't have any regrets. It was great fun and it gave me a great grounding in programming and the technical side of things, which I still enjoy and find really useful today, so no real regrets.



» [Spectrum] Although Cecco worked on *Cop Out*, his first proper release was *Equinox*, which went down a storm.



» [Amstrad] Not one to shy away from expanding on a classic, *Deliverance* was the follow up to *Stormlord*.



» [Spectrum] When Cecco first started working for Mikro-Gen, he was asked to get stuck into *Cop Out*.

YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

We were inundated with questions from **Retro Gamer** readers for Raffaele Cecco. He managed to answer a good selection of them…

Why was *Cybernoid* so hard?
I wanted it to be challenging. But because it was played almost exclusively by me during development I became totally brilliant at playing it – and totally desensitised to how hard it was for everyone else. Sorry!

Why did you eventually leave Mikro-Gen?
The company had lost direction and I think most of the development staff had outgrown the management/owners. It was essentially a family business and none of the development staff were from the family if you get my drift.

Did you ever consider working for Dinamic?
Not that I remember.

What was your favourite Spectrum/8-bit/16-bit game (apart from your own) and what games do you rate from this current generation?
My favourite Speccy games were *Jet Pac*, *Zynapse* and *Knight Lore*. And my favourite 16-bitters were *Gunstar Heroes* by Treasure on Mega Drive – a totally bizarre but brilliant shooter – and *Zelda* and *Super Mario World* on the SNES. I have to say, I don't really play games anymore so I can't make any useful comments about modern games, although I still have a passing interest in them.

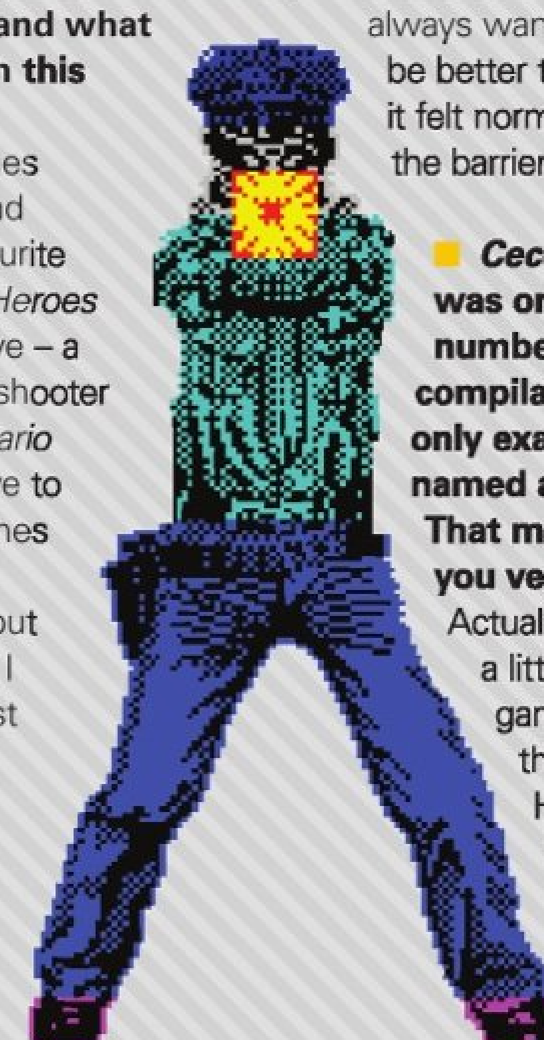
Did you plan out games before you started, or did their design evolve as you wrote them?
It was generally about 70 per cent planning, with the rest being made up/adapted as I went along.

Did you ever code anything on the Commodore 64 yourself, or did you rely totally on your colleague Nick Jones?
Nick did all the C64 stuff. He did a great job too.



What game(s) have influenced you the most?
Super Mario World and *Zelda* for the sophistication of game design and absorbing atmosphere. They were on a level all of their own, although I did enjoy lots of other games too, like *Castlevania* by Konami.

As a consumer, I knew that Cecco meant quality. Did you ever feel pressured to live up to that reputation, either personally or from publishers?
No – I didn't feel pressured. You always want your next game to be better than the last one, so it felt normal to try and push the barriers.



***Cecco's Collection* was one of the tiny number of game compilations (if not the only example) to be named after their creator. That must have made you very proud…**
Actually, I thought it was a little odd to name a game collection after the author! That was Hewson's decision. Having said that, it was probably an easy and natural decision to make.


DRUNKOMETER
WEEEOMETER
MIN
MAX
BAST
POI
000



How To Be A Complete Bastard

BEING A BASTARD HAS NEVER BEEN SO MUCH FUN

» RETROREVIVAL



» SPECTRUM
» VIRGIN GAMES
» 1987

When Virgin Games released *How To Be A Complete Bastard* in 1987, it must have known that controversy wasn't going to be too far away. Indeed, the liberal press at the time was quick to aim its disgust towards such a crass (but oh-so-funny) videogame.

Created by Sentient Software – the team behind the excellent *Tai-Pan* and the rather spiffy Spectrum conversion of *Winter Games* – and based upon the massively popular book by Adrian Edmondson, *How To Be A Complete Bastard* lived up to its name by allowing you to act like a complete and utter bastard to all those around you.

Taking on the role of Edmondson himself, you're presented with a large house – seen from two very distinct views – and are basically allowed to run riot around it, causing as much mayhem as possible to both the building itself and the yuppie guests inside it. Beer can be consumed, umbrellas can be broken and items like laxatives and itching powder can be used against the party's many guests. There are four on-screen gauges to be filled – a weeeometer, drunkometer, fartometer and smellometer – and if you upset guests so that they leave the party altogether, you'll be given bonus letters which eventually spell out 'Complete-Bastard'.

While its bawdy humour and abrupt game endings seem rather twee today – you'll immediately die if you consume too much curry, for example – this was an absolute riot upon its relief, and felt a lot like Gremlin's *Jack The Nipper*, but for 'grown-ups'. Bolstered by its controversial 15 certificate (although, in reality, it really wasn't that offensive) and its flamboyant frontman, *How To Be A Complete Bastard* proved to be rather popular, even if most critics soon got bored with its beer and fart gags. Nowadays, it's easy to scoff at the game's limited appeal, but if you were a 14-year old kid it was one of the funniest games around, and something that every underage minor had to have in the collection. Even if it was on an unmarked C-90 cassette tape, because your parents wouldn't actually buy it for you. *





>> Well, the 3DS is finally here, so we've showcased the best and worst games that we think you'd like to play. It's also been an interesting month for iOS thanks to the awesome Forget-Me-Not and a mediocre Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3 port

PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Shadow Wars
Julian Gollop takes a dull franchise and adds his typical strategy magic to it.



STUART
Ridge Racer 3D
There's little new here, but it's extremely fast, looks great in 3D and feels typically *Ridge*.



DAVID
Pilotwings Resort
It may be insanely short, but it remains a thoroughly relaxing game to play.

>> PILOTWINGS RESORT

Pilotwings Resort

PILOTWINGS RESORTS TO REPURPOSING

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £39.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** MONSTER GAMES
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» A launch game for the Super Nintendo in North America, *Pilotwings* stood out from the machine's launch roster thanks to its typically Nintendo take on the flight sim. It was with the release of *Pilotwings 64* in 1996 that the series really came to wider attention and acclaim. Still the pinnacle of the series, the sequel boasted a great blend of superb visuals, realistic flight mechanics and vast areas to explore.



» [3DS] As you would expect, the 3D works well to add a real sense of depth and exhilaration to the flying.

GO DEEPER

The facts behind Pilotwings Resort

>> In free flight mode, players explore Wuhu island, meeting certain objectives to unlock more time in the air and dioramas

>> *Pilotwings Resort* was developed by Monster Games, well-known for the *Excitebike* sequels on the Wii



It's common for the *Pilotwings* series to flap its wings whenever Nintendo has a new machine to launch that makes use of some fancy new bit of graphical gimmickry. It all started back in 1991, of course, when the original *Pilotwings* emerged as a launch title for the Super Nintendo and was used to show off the machine's impressive Mode 7 effects. Then, 15 years ago, it helped the N64 to make an early impact with the sublime launch game *Pilotwings 64*. This year, Nintendo is looking to the franchise as a way to show off the 3D capabilities of the 3DS, and, to this end, *Pilotwings Resort* is a success, featuring the best use of 3D effects on the handheld.

The main game is a typical mission mode, and sees you working your way through five increasingly challenging flight classes, earning points in the conventional *Pilotwings* fashion: flying through hoops, improving your landings, popping balloons, and so on. A few quirkier missions help to mix things up a little, such as escorting UFOs back to their mothership and chasing a speeding car around the island, shooting balloons tied to it.

While solid, inoffensive fun that is perfectly suited to portable gaming, *Pilotwings Resort* sadly feels a little lightweight, especially compared to the series' pinnacle, *Pilotwings 64*. You can pretty much see all that the game has to offer in a few short hours, and with just one island to explore, the repurposed isle of Wuhu from *Wii Sports Resort*, this seems like where much of the problem lies.

Not only will those who have played *Wii Sports* already be familiar with the island, but anyone who hasn't can catch up in a few minutes anyway, and the island features unimaginative landmarks that offer no real interactivity or sense of discovery. Hell, even adding some *Wii Sports*-style mini-games would have solved the issue a smidge. As a result, it won't be long before you'll be craving a change of scenery.

For us, *Resort* sits somewhere in the middle of the *Pilotwings* series. Aesthetically, it might look closer to *Pilotwings 64*, but gameplay-wise it actually shares more in common with the original game. What's there is certainly solid, but what's there sadly isn't enough to warrant £40.

In a Nutshell

***Pilotwings Resort* looks great and plays solidly, providing a great visual showcase for the 3DS, but it feels slight on options and features. This has all the hallmarks of a first-generation game on new hardware that you'll trade when something better comes along.**

>> Score **69%**

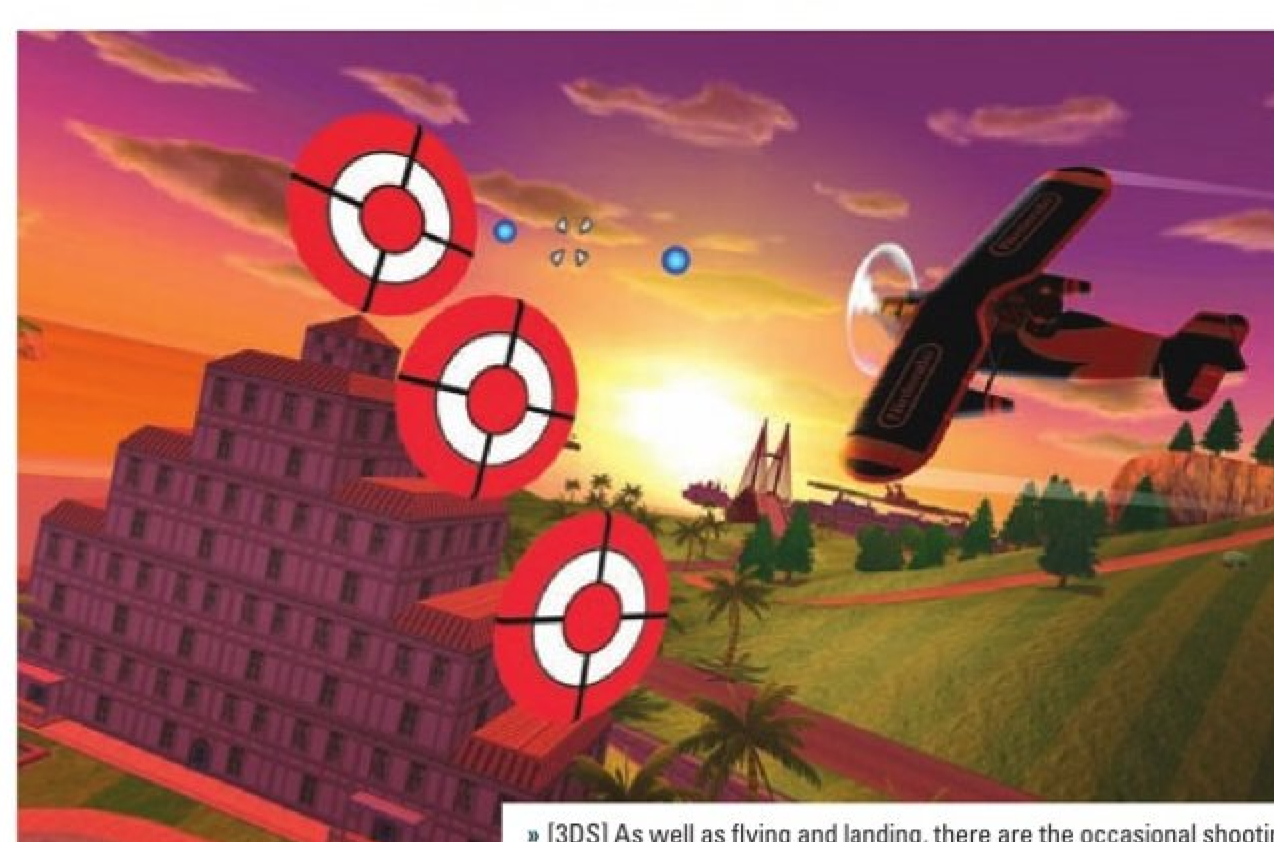
WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
PILOTWINGS 64 (NINTENDO 64)

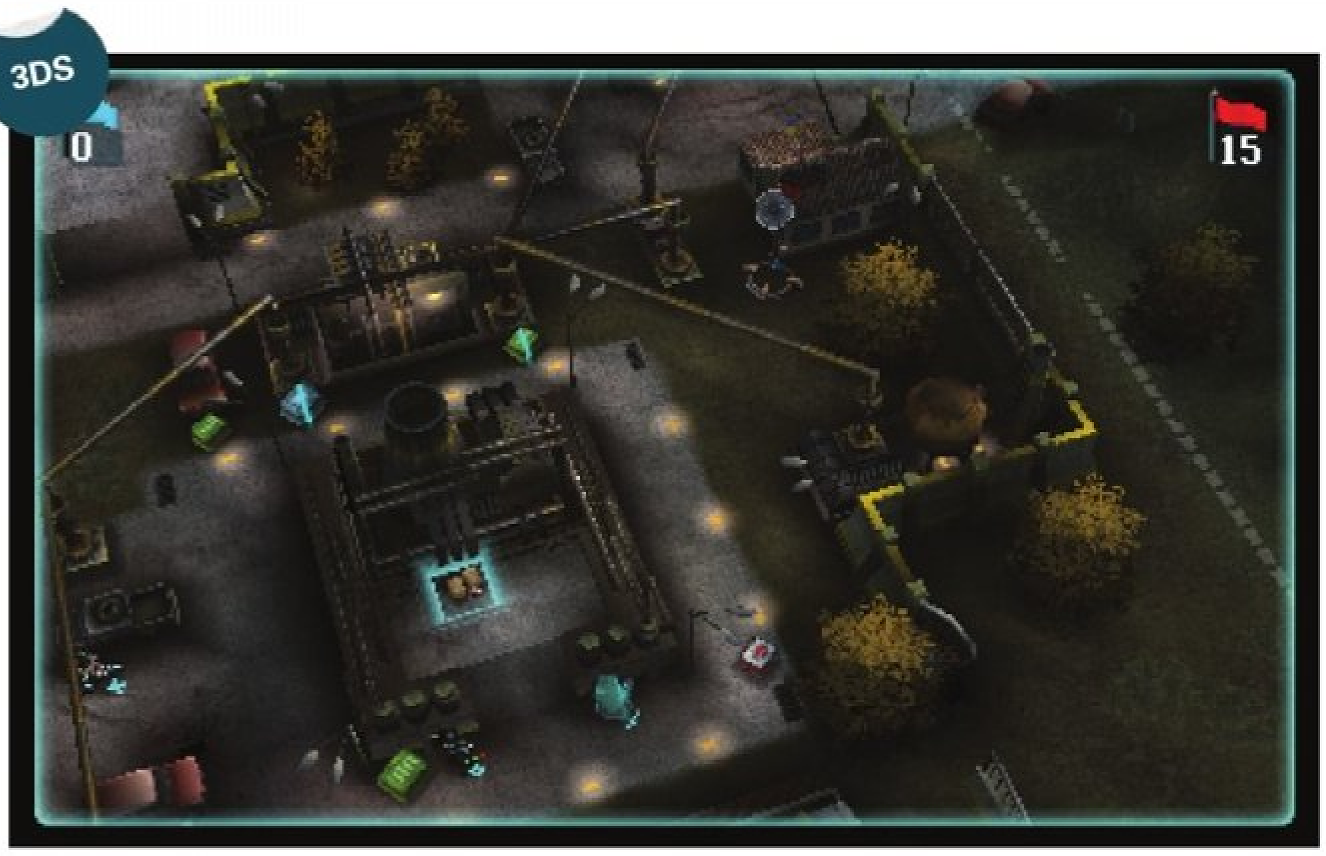


▼ SOMETHING NEW
WII SPORTS RESORT (WII)





» [3DS] As well as flying and landing, there are the occasional shooting missions. It's all a bit *Top Gun* meets *Total Wipeout*, to be honest.



Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars

JULIAN GOLLOP REIGNITES TURN-BASED STRATEGY

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT » **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT SOFIA » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



Julian Gollop is the undisputed master of the turn-based strategy genre. So when he first told us that he was working on a brand new title, we became rather excited. The end result, *Shadow Wars*, is a spin-off of Ubisoft's *Ghost Recon* series of all things, but worry not, for beneath its drab military exterior and generic soldiers is an strategy RPG that easily matches the glory days of *Laser Squad* and *X-COM*.

Initially starting off life as a DS game, *Shadow Wars* is something of a bare-bones 3DS release, at least in how it utilises the features from the new system. You won't find anything that makes use of Street Pass, nor the ability to play online, and while the 3D effect is very subtle, cleverly showing depth in surroundings and the height of terrain, it doesn't really have the same wow factor that some of the other launch titles boast.

Worry not, though, because from a gameplay point of view *Shadow Wars* reigns supreme over its handheld peers, delivering a massive amount of gameplay that constantly evolves over its very lengthy campaign. Every little idea or gameplay mechanic from past Gollop games has been crammed into the tiny cart, and there is a wealth of additional missions to play through, both single-player and turn-based multiplayer, that will easily keep you busy until the 3DS's big hitters start arriving.

What we love about *Shadow Wars* is the sheer amount of content that it offers. Additional points are awarded for finishing levels on higher difficulty settings, and the six available characters can be constantly updated with new abilities, while everything from continual line of sight to hiding within buildings or receiving return fire must be brought into consideration when planning each and every move.

Shadow Wars brings little new to the strategy RPG table, but what it offers is an essential addition to the genre that has been polished to near-perfection. In short, it's the one launch game that every 3DS owner should consider owning above all others.

» Score **88%**



» [3DS] As you upgrade your team you'll be able to choose between a number of different weapons.



OPINION



I've never been a fan of *Ghost Recon* and would have overlooked this were it not for the presence of Julian Gollop. Thank God I didn't! It's a wonderful little strategy game, full of depth but completely accessible. Easily my favourite game of the year so far.

Ashley Day

Rayman 3D

EVEN 3D CAN'T HIDE RAYMAN'S AGE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** UBISOFT » **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT CASABLANCA » **PLAYERS:** 1



Ubisoft has certainly got good value out of Michel Ancel's *Rayman 2*. Since its debut in 1999, it's been ported to a huge number of systems, from Sony's PS2 to the original DS, where it was also a launch title.

This new update is essentially a port of the superior Dreamcast version, but now includes eye-straining 3D and incredibly subtle tweaks to the original gameplay. In fact, the new additions are so subtle that we couldn't actually see any differences.

Despite the fact that it's still a fairly enjoyable platformer, the general lack of care and attention this has been given – it still has the wonky camera angles and occasionally iffy controls of the original – is rather upsetting to see.

Rayman 2 is now 12 years old, and like a great many early 3D platformers it's beginning to show its age, especially during the maddening boss encounters. Our advice for those who want a deep 3D adventure is to ignore this quick and easy port and wait for Nintendo's makeover of *Ocarina Of Time*.

» Score **60%**



» [3DS] The 3D effect is quite convincing in certain sections of the game, but jarring in others.

Super Street Fighter IV 3D

CAPCOM'S SUPERB FIGHTER GOES PORTABLE

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



» [3DS] Visually this is superb, looking like a nigh-on identical version of its bigger home console brothers.



If you're the sort of gamer who won't even consider playing Capcom's massively successful brawler unless it's attached to a £120 arcade stick then look away now. This game is definitely not for you.

Let's face it: Capcom was never going to be able to emulate the original game in all its glory; the 3DS just isn't equipped for it. Yes, the analogue stick is surprisingly good and yes, you'll eventually get used to the awkwardly placed D-pad, but the button layout, while perfectly acceptable in the days of the SNES, just isn't suitable for Capcom's magnificent fighter.

It's a niggle, certainly, but it's not a game-breaking one, and once you accept the fact that concessions have been made to get a passable version of *Super Street Fighter IV* running on a handheld, you'll soon be lost in this gorgeous and expansive



fighting game. Nearly everything from the home console versions is here, including all 35 fighters, their alternate DLC costumes, the trial modes and even online play. It's a staggering achievement that is boosted by a brand new Figure Collection that lets you trade and fight with mini model replicas courtesy of the 3DS's Street Pass feature.

It also looks incredible thanks to some truly stunning animation and an all-new 'Dynamic View' mode that really shows off the 3DS's 3D capabilities, although it must be said that the skewed viewpoint is at the expense of gameplay.

Stick snobs won't give it the time of day and we certainly see their point of view, but everyone else will discover a wonderfully deep fighter that just keeps on giving and giving. Highly recommended.

OPINION



Cramming the entirety of *Super Street Fighter IV* onto the 3DS is an impressive achievement. Visually, apart from static backgrounds, you'd struggle to tell it apart from the under-the-telly versions. In the respect of miniaturising the *SF IV* experience for portable gaming, this succeeds.

Stuart Hunt

>> Score **82%**

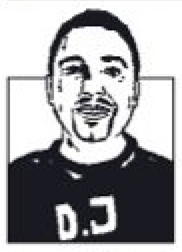


» [3DS] Take a picture of yourself using the built-in camera and it will be displayed while you're racing.

Ridge Racer 3D

NEW HARDWARE? THIS CALLS FOR RIDGE RACER!

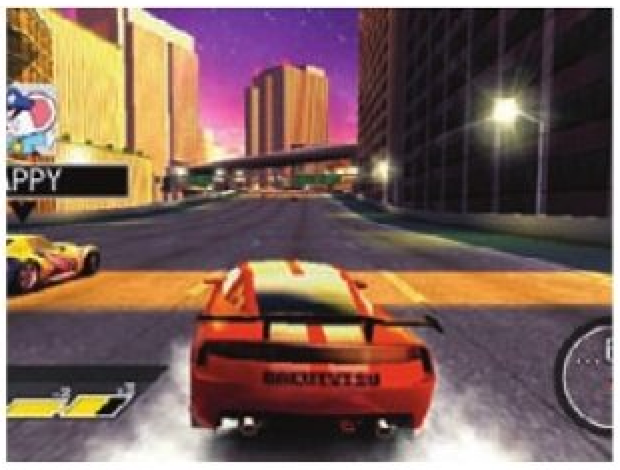
» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 3DS » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



***Ridge Racer* has been enthralling speed junkies with its fast-paced action and sexy muscle cars for 18 years now. We're delighted to say that *Ridge Racer 3D* continues this tradition in fine style.**

First the bad news, though. Like other portable *Ridge Racer* games, this is more of a compilation of past glories rather than a brand new release, meaning hardcore fans of the series will already be more than familiar with the many tracks and cars on offer. The good news, however, is that this over-familiarity ultimately doesn't matter because *Ridge Racer 3D* is just so much damned fun to play.

Breathlessly fast – especially once you gain access to the higher-tier cars – and endlessly playable, *Ridge Racer 3D* is an exhilarating experience that's packed to the brim with all sorts of neat gameplay modes and genuinely effective 3D.



Street Pass Duel enables you to download ghosts automatically from other players, Time Attack offers endless replay value, One-Make Race pits you against seven identical opponents, while standard races and Quick Tour allow you to jump into races or tournaments of your choosing. Add in the now-traditional Grand Prix mode and *Ridge Racer 3D* offers surprising value. In fact, the only real downside is the complete lack of online play, although four-player local is offered.

Progression is also solid, with new cars, tracks and music constantly unlocking, meaning you're always tempted for one more race, if only to see what your next reward will be.

Add in some good 3D, which gives a great sense of depth as you thunder around the tracks, and *Ridge Racer 3D* becomes the racer that all future 3DS titles will need to beat.

OPINION



This is this best 3DS game I've played so far. It looks great, the 3D effects are superb and, more importantly, it's a really solid *Ridge Racer* game. Lack of online racing is a disappointment, but if you are a fan of the series I wouldn't let that discourage you from a purchase.

Stuart Hunt

>> Score **85%**

Forget-Me-Not

YOU WON'T FORGET THIS IN A HURRY

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £1.19 » **PUBLISHER:** NYARLU LABS » **DEVELOPER:** BRANDON WILLIAMSON » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



If there's one that thing that constantly impresses us about the iPhone it's the sheer amount of creativity and imagination that can be found in many of its games. Brandon Williamson's *Forget-Me-Not* is no different, and while it has a few niggly control issues, it's a clever blending of genres easily mixing *Pac-Man* and *Rogue* with a little dash of *Adventure*.

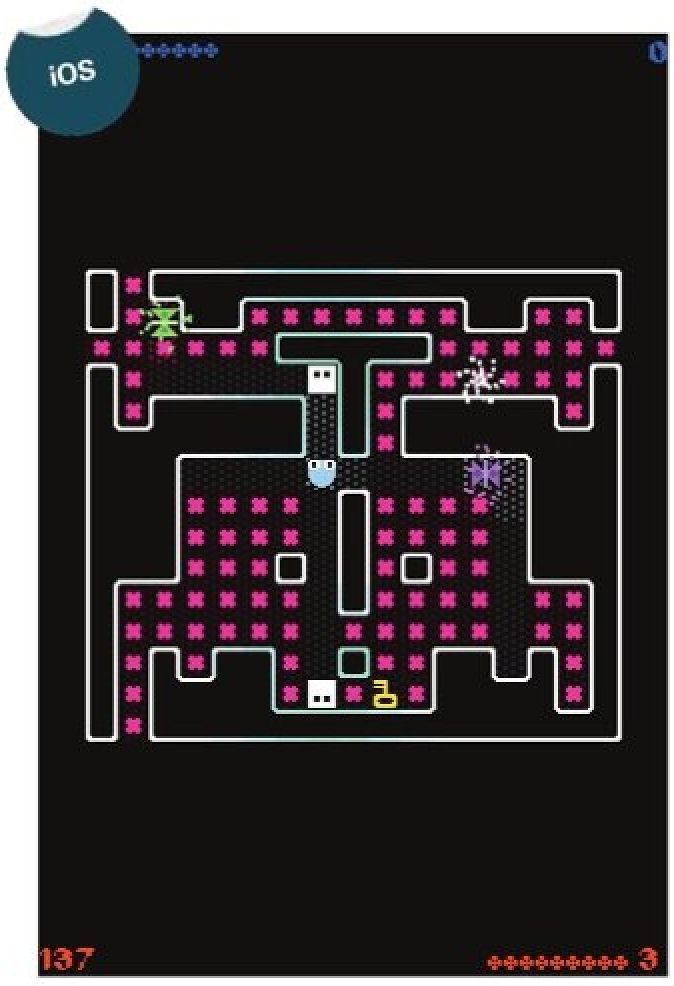
The aim of each level is to simply clear the stage of forget-me-nots. Once the final flower is picked, a door will magically appear and you can then use the key found on each stage to unlock it and proceed to the next level. Easy enough, except that Williamson has added plenty of annoying monsters to complicate your task on each procedurally generated stage.

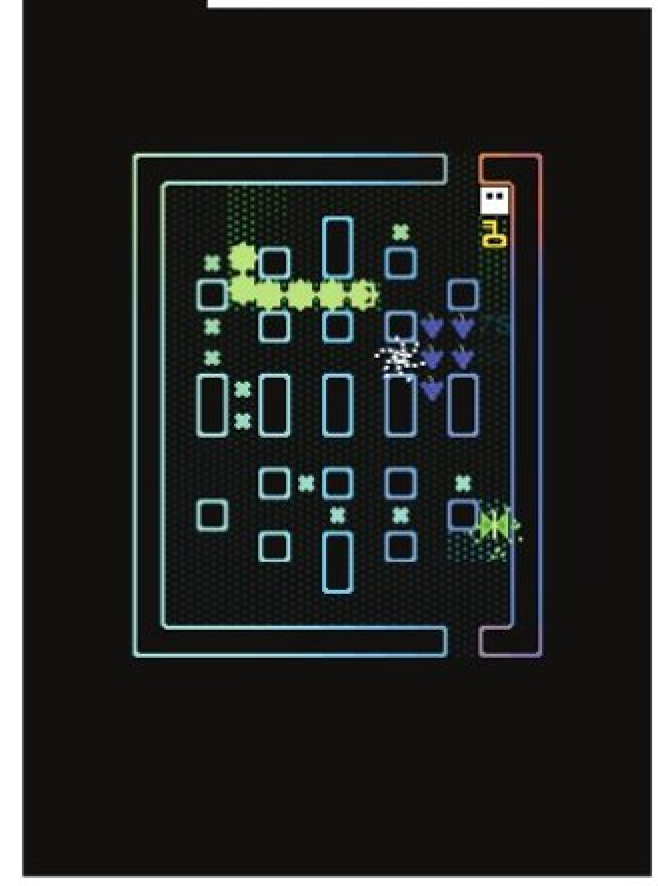
Said monsters come in a variety of sizes and all boast their own unique attack patterns. You're able to fire at enemies in whatever direction you're currently facing, but it's also possible to get hit by your own bullets when you enter wraparound parts of each stage. Dragging the key behind you acts as a handy shield, but it can easily be grabbed from you by nearby enemies.

Risk and reward comes into play heavily here as defeated enemies, while dangerous at close range, drop power-ups and fruit that can greatly boost your points and give you much-needed health, as it's game over once you run out of your allotted lives.

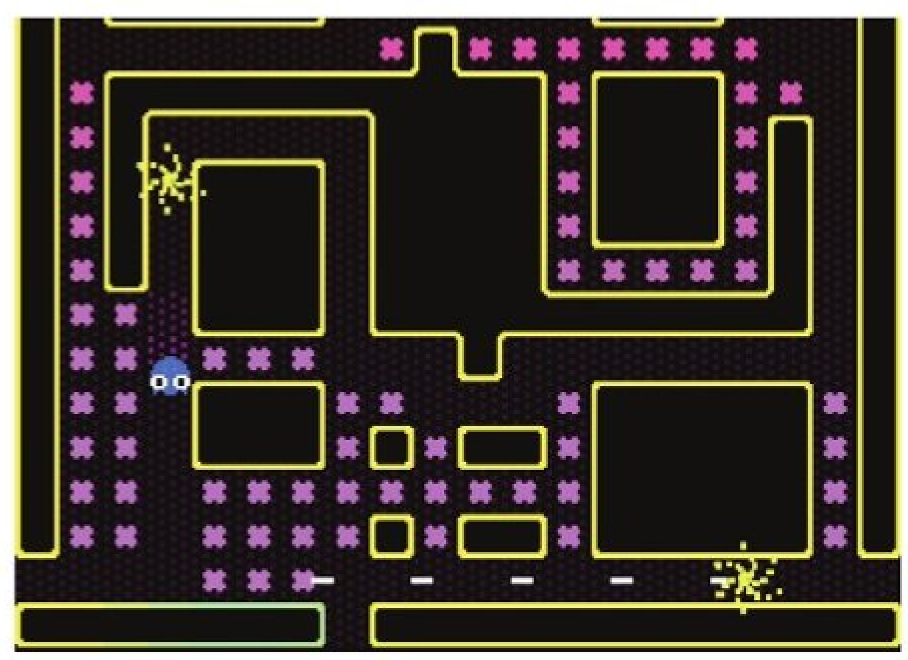
Peppered with a variety of game modes ranging from a simple survival mode, which just keeps going until you lose your one life, to an interesting two-player effort and featuring glorious retro aesthetics, *Forget-Me-Not* is a hellishly addictive title that constantly drags you back for one more game. Only some occasionally frustrating controls stop it from achieving true greatness.

>> Score **88%**





» [iPhone] Retro fans will spot a ton of inspirations when playing *Forget-Me-Not*.

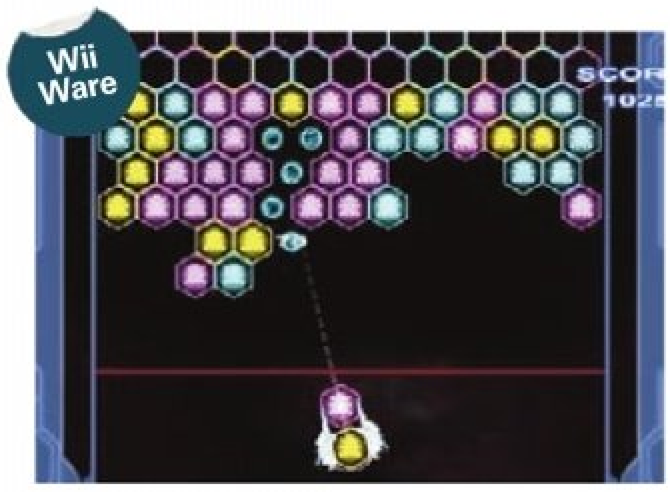


OPINION



The controls let it down somewhat – although you can tinker around with sensitivity settings – but there's no denying that this is a clever little blend of genres. It doesn't quite boast the addictive nature of *Rogue*, but it's well worth the paltry asking price.

Darran Jones



Arcade Essentials

» **SYSTEM:** WiiWARE
» **PRICE:** 500 POINTS (£3.50) » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> Nordcurrent's latest release features clones of five classic arcade games ranging from *Space Invaders* to *Puzzle Bobble* and *Qix*, all wrapped up in kitsch retro styling. Sadly, the idea is better than the reality, as fiddly controls and uninspiring gameplay let the package down. The price is certainly decent and it does look very nice, but such minor plus points can't justify the lacklustre gameplay.

>> Score **50%**



Bejeweled Blitz Live

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS (£6.80) » **PLAYERS:** 1

>> PopCap's superb puzzler just isn't suited to Live Arcade. The controls are slow and lack the speed and subtly of the PC and iOS versions, while the actual content is truly shocking – the two available game modes require you to do nothing more than score as many points as possible in 60 seconds. Stick with the free Facebook version.

>> Score **52%**



Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE
» **PRICE:** £0.59 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

>> It looks the part and features plenty of gory specials and characters, but *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3*'s controls just can't do it justice. Unlike Capcom's iOS effort, this tries to emulate the original arcade layout and it just doesn't work, turning it into an even clumsier fighter than it was originally. One to avoid, we're afraid.

>> Score **48%**



Super Monkey Ball 3D

» **SYSTEM:** 3DS
» **PRICE:** £39.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

>> The *Monkey Ball* franchise has fallen a long way. This new version offers jarring 3D, gyroscope controls that hinder your 3D viewing, safety rails for a complete lack of challenge, no Monkey Target, and its main story mode, while still fun, can be completed in under two hours. This would be fine for a £3 iOS release, but it's laughable for 40 notes.

>> Score **29%**

iOS

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** iPHONE/iPAD
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £1.79
- » **PUBLISHER:** TOWER STUDIOS
- » **DEVELOPER:** VIVID GAMES
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

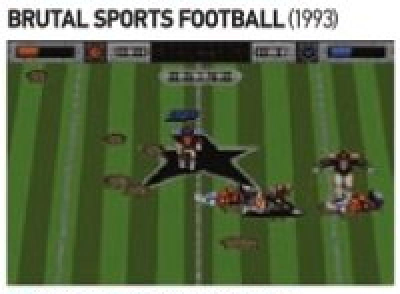
BRIEF HISTORY

» Beginning life on the Atari ST in 1988, the *Speedball* series had reached a number of machines, most famously the Amiga and less notably on the NES, where it was oddly renamed *Klashball*. The future sport, which mixes elements of handball, pinball, hockey and rugby, went on to spawn a number of sequels, and received a full 3D update in *Speedball 2: Tournament*.

✱WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

BRUTAL SPORTS FOOTBALL (1993)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

NBA JAM iOS (2011)



✱ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Speedball 2: Evolution

>> Did you know that Speedball is the name of a real combat sport? Well, sort of. It's a game variant in paintball involving artificial obstacles

>> The game has been developed by Vivid Games and produced by Jon Hare's Tower Studios, apparently using the original Amiga source code as the basis



» [iPad] The fact that we're doing this means we're going to win.





» [iPad] Find one of the many game imbalances and this kind of score won't be unusual.

BRUTAL SPORTS REDUX

Speedball 2: Evolution



One of the beauties of iOS games for both consumers and developers is that they allow for post-purchase improvements, be it adding more value by way of additional new stages, or fixing any technical issues or bugs that become apparent once they're out in the wild.

For less than £2, *Speedball 2: Evolution* is without doubt absolutely worth your money. But it's not without a few issues that we hope get sorted out with incoming updates (we're playing version 1.2). The biggest problem is the slow to show computer AI – the game only really gets challenging once you reach the game's new Intergalactic League, which comprises a bevy of alien teams and different arenas. Before this point, though, rival players rarely seem to put up much of a fight, can be easily muscled off the ball, and we also found two exploitable tricks with goalies, whereby if you run straight up the middle of the arena and force them to commit to a tackle with a dummy at the very last second, more often than not you leave yourself with an open goalmouth to score. You can still use this technique to spam your score on the later teams in the game, but their improved defence makes creating these opportunities trickier to do.

In every other respect, though, *Evolution* is a quality conversion. It has a solid multiplayer component, a lengthy career mode and all the aspects you would hope for and expect from a *Speedball* game, from the addictive gameplay and various inventive methods of scoring points to the subtle management aspect that sees you scouting for fresh players and sending your team to the gym to beef up their stats with winnings between matches.

The presentation is also excellent. The new HD makeover does a great job of capturing the look of the Amiga original while also looking fresh and contemporary on the high-resolution screen. And while the tilt controls – strangely the default setting – feel a tad unnecessary, as they don't really lend themselves to fast-paced top-down eight-way movement games, the virtual thumb pad setup works better than we expected. Either way, though, we have to admit that we sorely missed a joystick for precision passing and shooting, but that's an issue more to do with the hardware than the software.

Speedball 2: Evolution is a solid version of the Amiga classic let down by a few niggles that will hopefully be rectified in future updates. As the game stands, though, at its low price, it still comes highly recommended from us.



» [iPad] Who needs Mode 7?

OPINION



Get to the later stages of this conversion and you'll finally discover a challenge that does the original game justice. Until then you'll have to trudge through dull matches that feature about as much challenge as a trip to Tesco. Here's hoping a future update sorts this out.

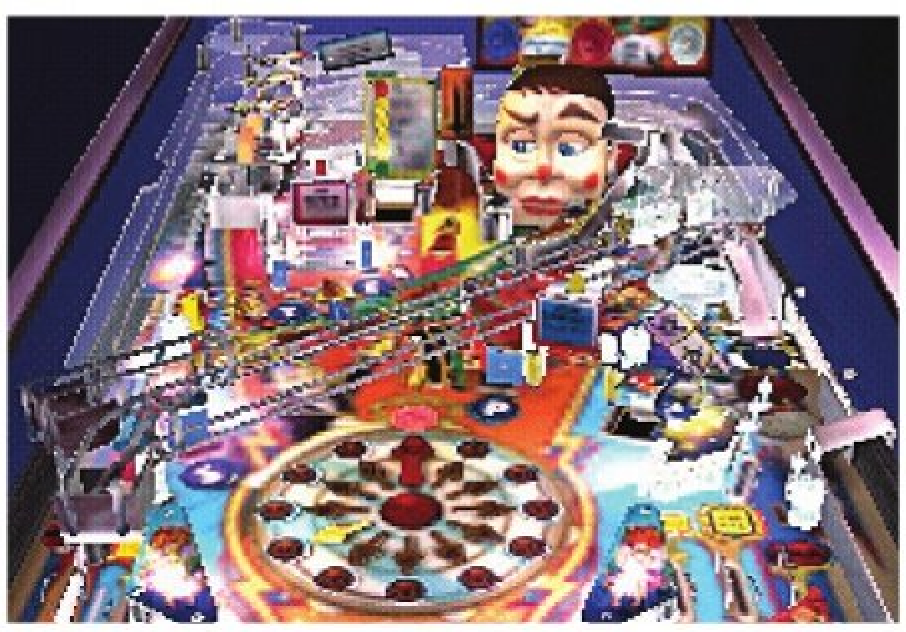
Darran Jones

In a Nutshell

It's not perfect, but Tower Studios offers a solid and very playable version of *Speedball 2*, and at a great price. If you're a fan, and with updates to come, you'd be mad not to buy it.

>> Score **70%**





» [PSP] *Funhouse* is circus-themed and features a menacing talking clown head.



OPINION

System 3's Gottlieb compilation was a wonderful effort when it was released several years ago, and it's good to see that the old magic is still there. A great range of tables, excellent physics and clever challenges add up to an impressive compilation at a reasonable price.

Darran Jones

Williams Pinball Classics

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** Wii, PS3, XBOX 360 » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £24.99 (£11.99 PSN) » **PUBLISHER:** SYSTEM 3 » **DEVELOPER:** FARSIGHT STUDIO » **PLAYERS:** 1-4



This compendium of pinball favourites from Williams has been available on various consoles, including the PSP, for quite a while now in the US. Whatever the reason for its late show in Europe, the game is now here, and we're pleased to report that the unexplained delay has been a good thing, as the game has been made better in the interim with some post-production tweaking.

Williams Pinball Classics offers the chance to smash a pinball around ten classic pinball tables – *Taxi*, *Space Shuttle*, *Funhouse*, *Black Night*, *Gorgar*, *Whirlwind*, *Jive Time*, *Pin*Bot*, *Sorcerer* and *Firepower* – and enjoy them in a variety of different modes. These include the Williams Challenge, a compulsive score attack marathon that sees you working your way through every table in the game by trying to smash the target score of each inside three credits, and the option to set up round robin tournaments with up to four friends locally or online. There's also a quick play mode, which takes place inside a virtual Game Room-style arcade. Here you can practise on each table at the cost of a credit, which you earn by achieving certain goals such as getting jackpots or unlocking multiballs, and you can spend them on unlocking free play for all of the tables.

With its photorealistic-looking tables, a decent amount of variety between them, and a range of camera modes – including a neat vertical screen mode, which is good for taking maximum advantage of the PSP screen's shape and size – along with realistic ball physics and authentic table sounds, there really is little preventing us from recommending that you pick this up. As far as video pinball collections go, you'd be hard pressed to find one that's been put together with more care and attention.

>> Score **87%**

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews



Mark Sibly's Blitz BASIC has been around since the days of the Amiga and he's just released a new iteration, inexplicably named Monkey. It's able to create programs for all popular operating systems, Flash or HTML 5 for the web, and XNA, which can be fed to an Xbox 360. Great stuff, although it's almost impossible to discuss without doing a Johnny Vegas impression!

SUB HUNTER

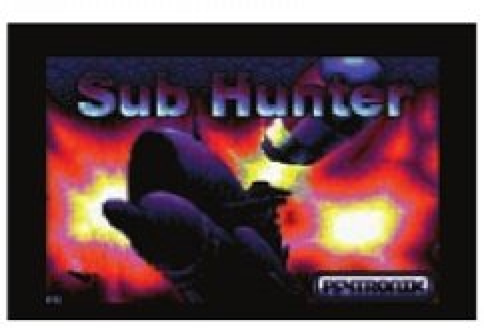
TIME AGAIN TO RUN SILENT, RUN DEEP



» [Amstrad CPC] There's something fishy going on.







» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD CPC

» **DEVELOPED BY:** PAUL KOOISTRA AND FRANK GASKING

» **LINK:** KIKSTART.EU/SUBHUNTER-CPC

» **RELEASE DATE:** 2011

» **PRICE:** £5.99 (TAPE), £11.99 (DISK) OR FREE DOWNLOAD

The ocean is a harsh mistress but has recently become even more treacherous after large stockpiles of mutagenic chemicals were dumped into it by an unnamed but no doubt sinister government department. Polluted seas aren't unusual, but the result of this particular toxic waste has been drastic and now, along with a huge increase in instances of swimmers going missing from Britain's beaches, Defra is finding all manner of hideously deformed creatures around our sceptred isle – and goodness only knows what lies beneath the waves that they haven't seen yet.

Well, it's time to find out, brave commander, because you, as a registered owner/operator of a Sub Hunter underwater rescue and combat unit, are going to work, and the primary task is, of course, to save the beleaguered swimmers who didn't listen to the coast guard's dire warnings before heading out for a dip.

What they need rescuing from isn't just the slavering jaws and grasping tentacles of hideously mutated marine life, because the people behind the dodgy dealings that lead to your being called in have sent submarines of their own into the area, each issued with orders to take out witnesses with extreme prejudice; if you want to protect the innocent and indeed yourself, that'll involve giving these shady characters both barrels, or, more accurately, tubes.

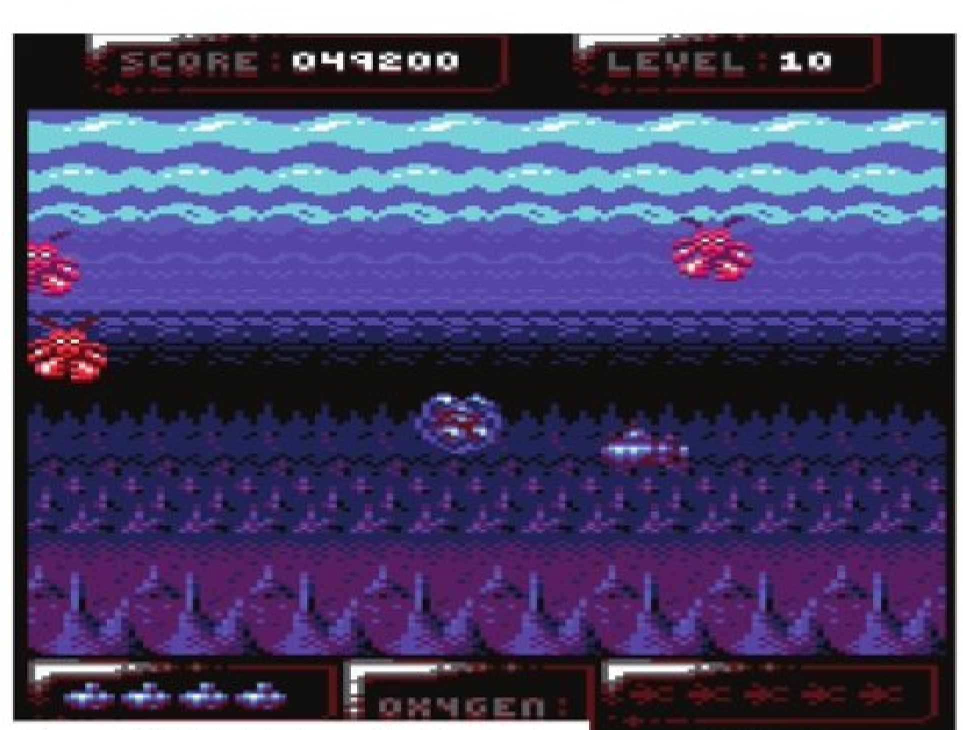
The action, inspired by the Mastertronic VIC-20 game *Sub Hunt* and a couple of Eighties coin-ops, has been divided into a series of sub-games – and yes, we did use exactly the same pun for the C64 review and no doubt need to apologise for a second time. The later stages of *Sub Hunter* mix in other elements, the need for timing or dodging skills, and even a little thought, but even what appear to be straight-out button-pummelling shoot-'em-up sections at the start of the game need to be approached cautiously, since friendly fire can do for genetically corrupted fish and helpless swimmers alike and, since collecting the latter is the key to progressing, going in with all torpedo tubes blazing will get the player absolutely nowhere. Hanging around too long isn't an option either, since your submarine only has a limited amount of oxygen aboard and breathing underwater without it can prove somewhat problematic.

Fans of CPC programmer Paul Kooistra's outstanding previous works, *Star Sabre* and *Dead On Time*, probably have high expectations, and, although it isn't quite as smooth as the C64 original and the play area is just a tad smaller, *Sub Hunter* on the CPC shouldn't be a disappointment to them. Kooistra has once again waved his magic wand and got Amstrad's hardware doing remarkable things, Frank Gasking's original graphics have been tweaked and fettled, and the AY arrangement of Thomas Mogensen's soundtrack by Hervé Monchatre fits in neatly. Most importantly of all, that just-one-more-go playability that we were so enamoured with previously has all made the transition unharmed.

90%



» [Amstrad CPC] To the rescue!



» [Amstrad CPC] We all live in a… blue-ish submarine.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

LADY KAKERLAK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** JÖRG 'DATALAND' HEYLTJES » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/LADY-K » **PRICE:** FREE



» [C64] Not your common household cockroach.

***Lady Kakerlak* is** Jörg Heyltjes' C64 take on the arcade title *Lady Bug* and sees the player's insect released into a series of corridors containing items that need to be gathered up while the static skulls and attentions of other arthropods are avoided. Some of the walls are revolving doors that can be pushed by the player's bug, changing the layout of the maze to give access to other areas and escape from pursuing enemies.

As with previous Dataland releases, both the sound and graphics could be more polished but serve their purpose well enough; an extensive options page is also available to adjust many of the game's settings so that it will suit just about any skill level, and a level editor has been included so gamers can extend the game for themselves. For those who lose sleep over such details, 'kakerlak' is 'cockroach' in German.

81%

GIMME BRIGHT

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** CLIMACUS
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/GIMME-BRIGHT » **PRICE:** FREE

The protagonist of *Gimme Bright* has apparently decided that the world is a dull place and sets out to do something about it. As he walks over platforms, they transmute from dark to bright, one segment at a time, and the level is completed when everything is radiantly coloured. But, of course, there are evil creatures who don't want their surroundings to be happy and shiny, so they in turn make it their mission to stop our hero, which usually involves killing him.

Those enemies each have a distinct movement pattern and vary from tricky to keyboard-gnawingly frustrating to deal with, and the purple cauldrons that first appear on the third level and wander around the screen, undoing all the player's hard work unless collided with, are particularly heinous. Completing the levels within the strict time limit is Herculean even with bonuses around offering invulnerability or extra time so, sadly, the difficulty soon becomes overwhelming and what is an otherwise well-executed game suffers for it.

66%

» [Spectrum] The light of my life.




» [Atari 2600] Glub, glub!





THE WICKED FATHER

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 2600 » **DEVELOPER:** JAMIE HAMSHERE
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/WICKED-FATHER » **PRICE:** FREE

Ever fancied playing the villain? If so, the story for *The Wicked Father* casts the player as the titular patriarch who, having just sealed his heavily insured family into the basement of an equally heavily insured house, now has to escape before being drowned by the rising waters.

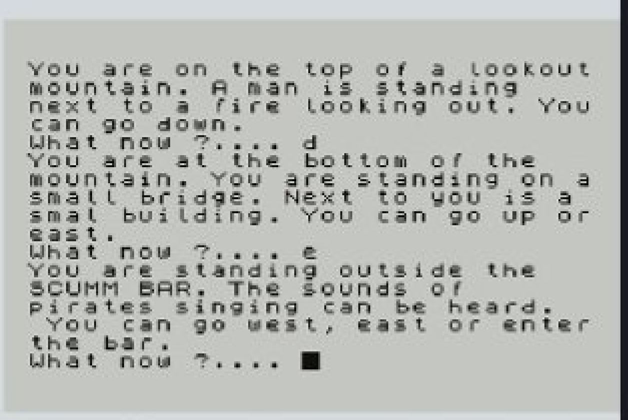
The challenge on every screen is reaching the dot representing the exit. Left and right on the joystick won't bring any surprises, but the job assigned to the fire button changes depending on whether the player is submerged or not: in air it's used to jump, while hammering it repeatedly when underwater will cause the sprite to swim upwards. Remaining submerged until the side walls of the play area are reduced to nothing will see our antihero out of air and drowned.

The storyline might be morally dubious, but the Atari has something of a history of that, and the game itself is traditional 2600 fast-paced, extremely challenging action – significant amounts of dexterity and practice are needed to avoid a watery grave.

78%

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Spectrum] Seems vaguely familiar...

>> Monkeying Around

Adventuring fan Patrick Furlong was recently in his attic and, among a box of tapes, discovered his attempt in 1999 to push *The Secret Of Monkey Island* into the Spectrum as a text adventure built with the Graphic Adventure Creator. So far there's only the discovered six-room prototype, but Furlong has decided to continue it, planning to tweak at least some of the scenes to include Spectrum-related in-jokes.


» [MSX] And we have a winner!

>> And The Winner Is...

The results of the 2010 MSXDev competition have been released. Top spot was taken by character-driven *Pong* variant *Heroes Arena*, with second and third going to adventures *Zombie Near* and *Hans' Adventure*. Neat *Quarth* clone *Qbiqs* came fourth, garnering a prize for its soundtrack, and BASIC blaster *Mission 2 Mir* was in last place. Have a peek at **kikstart.eu/msxdev2010-results** for the full results.


» [PC] Windows-based background editing.

>> Come Back To My Pad

And finally, although it's not directly running on an 8-bit, a new revision of PC-based development tool Char Pad has been released to mixed response. It can be used to create static or scrolling backgrounds for Commodore 64 and other 8-bit games. If the editors don't notice, a review might be slipped in with the indie games next issue, but keep that to yourselves, okay? **kikstart.eu/charpad**.

HOMEBREW

>> The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'SBREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

>> Power Slide!

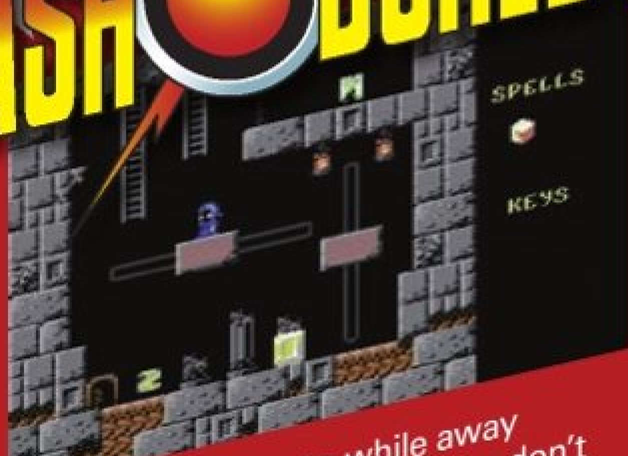
Along with CPC *Sub Hunter*, Psytronik has been a busy little speed demon, releasing *Autocross Racing* for Windows-based PCs. It boasts a wide selection of tracks with different driving surfaces, 20 cars that can sustain damage during races, and a physics engine under the hood that allows the vehicles to power slide around the track like an overenthusiastic *Top Gear* presenter, all viewed top down and reminiscent of *Super Cars* or *Hot Rod*. *Autocross Racing* is already available to order from Psytronik's website (**kikstart.eu/autocross**) and we'll have a look at it next issue.



>> Feeling A Little Queasy

Locomalito, developer of *L'Abbaye Des Morts* and the excellent old-school blaster *Hydorah*, is working on a new project titled *Viriax*. Although there isn't much to say about the game itself right now other than that the protagonist is a super virus infecting its human host, we do have to point readers at the preview video behind **kikstart.eu/viriax** – a surreal mixture of in-game footage and people pretending to be futuristic doctors.

FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at **Grand Mystic Quest Of Discovery**

C64-STYLED ADVENTURING is the order of the day. Guide a wizard through treacherous caverns in search of a mysterious, sealed-up treasure trove. Spells are collected to help in the quest and progress is saved so players can quit and return to the game whenever they have a moment. **kikstart.eu/gmq**

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING. . .



NESTALGIA

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/NESTALGIA



For fans of the turn-based role-playing game, *Nestalgia* could soon become a virtual home. Adventurers can select a male or female avatar from four classes of character – another four are available to paying players – before the poor little being is dumped into a cave, devoid of memories and guided only by a mysterious voice whose connection conks out just after the tutorial.

Quite familiar territory, of course, but where things really start to differ is that *Nestalgia* is played online and allows several explorers to simultaneously roam around its 8-bit world. Grinding through the forests near Ennar Village or heading off to attempt one of the quests offered up by NPCs can therefore either be taken on as a lone gun or among a party of fellow players gathered together through the chat window.

Nestalgia has suffered a little from its own success so, even when things aren't too busy, there's quite a bit of lag and the scrolling window occasionally freezes before jumping to wherever the avatar has ended up; this is a little frustrating, but the turn-based nature of the game prevents these stutters from mortally wounding the player since battles will wait for user input. Hiccups aside, hardened RPG addicts and more casual players alike should find something to amuse themselves here.



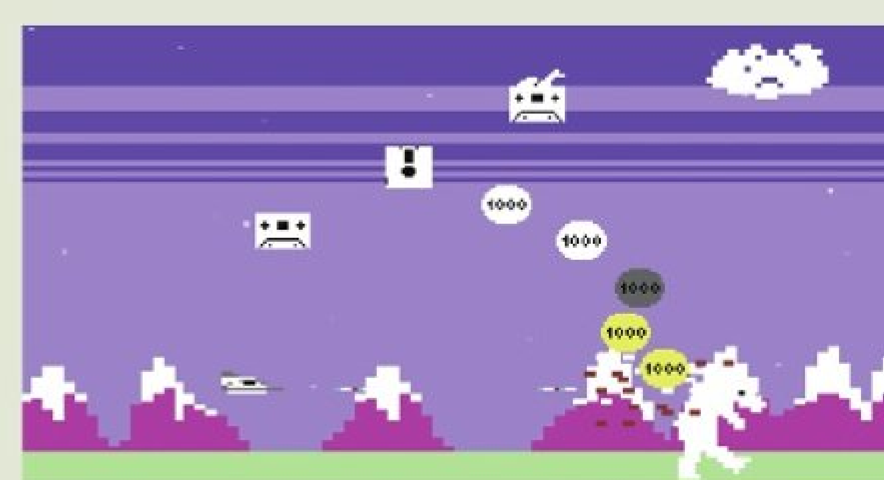
SNAKE MAN

» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/SNAKE-MAN



There probably aren't many mobile phone users who haven't played the almost ubiquitous *Snake* at some point but, rather than clone it directly, *Snake Man* does at least offer some kinks to the design: there's a mouse that occasionally appears in the maze to be caught for bonus points, colliding with a wall isn't immediately fatal, and the length of the snake carries over between levels.

Sadly, the rest of the game isn't really inspiring. Graphics are solid but movement is distinctly jerky, the controls are finicky and, apart from a couple of spot effects for eating, bumping into walls and dying, the majority of the time the game remains stoically silent. Even the sub-£1 price of 80 Microsoft Points is asking a lot with far better renditions out there.



ATTACK OF THE MUTANT CAMELS FROM MARS

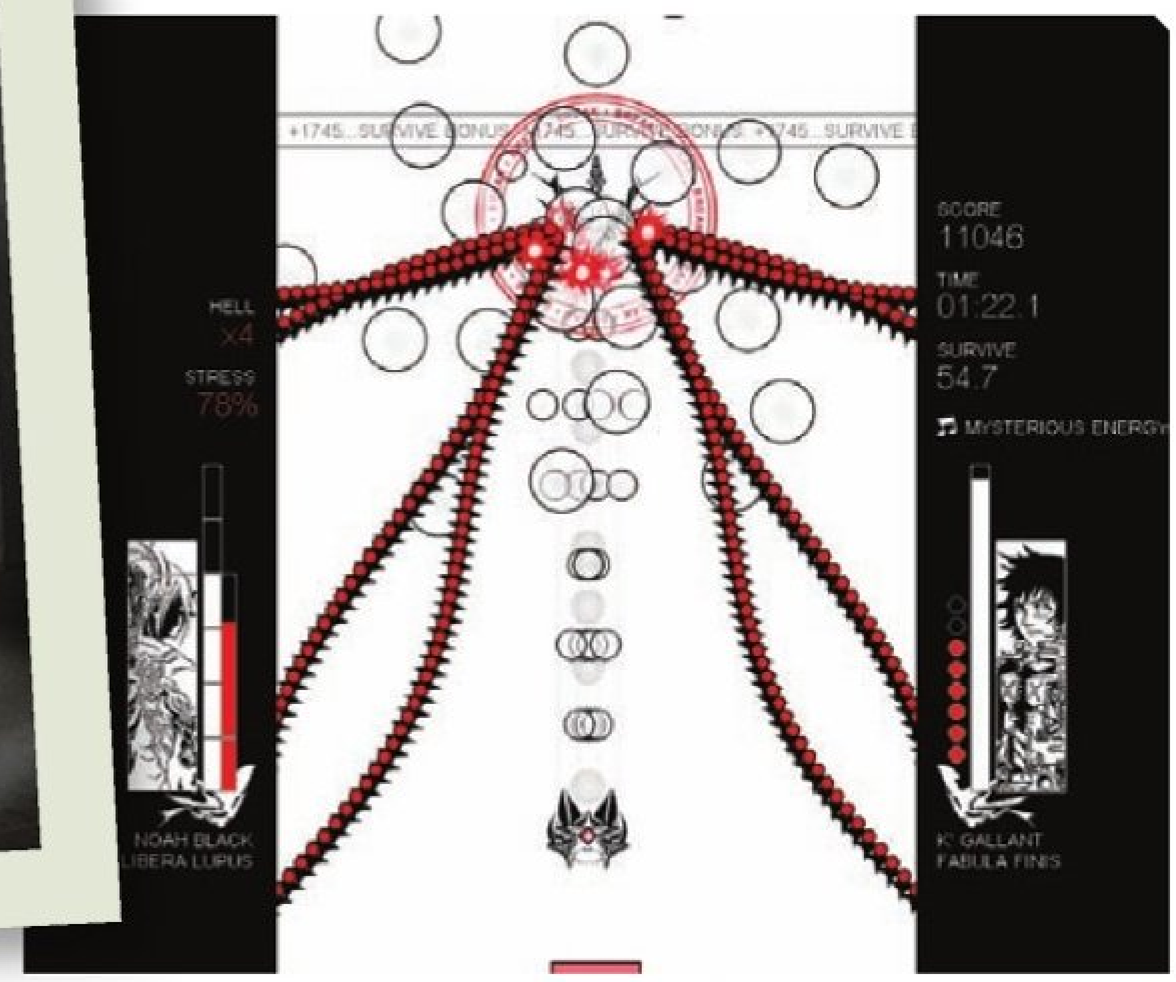
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/AMCFM



In case you couldn't work it out, *Attack Of The Mutant Camels From Mars* is a tribute to Jeff Minter and his C64 games, taking both its inspiration and a good selection of graphics from Llamasoft's back catalogue. That means flying a spaceship into battle against mutant camels, floppy disks, guinea pigs and other similarly surreal enemies with only the occasional power-up for company.

The entire game is seriously difficult. The industrial levels of inertia, a small game window and the fast-moving enemies that are flung into existence behind the player will regularly gang up to steal precious lives and power-ups. *AMCFM* isn't impossible, but even experienced fans are likely to find it frustrating.


» Abraham Morales (right) and other members of Red Wolf.


» [360] A quiet moment in *Vorpal*... honest!

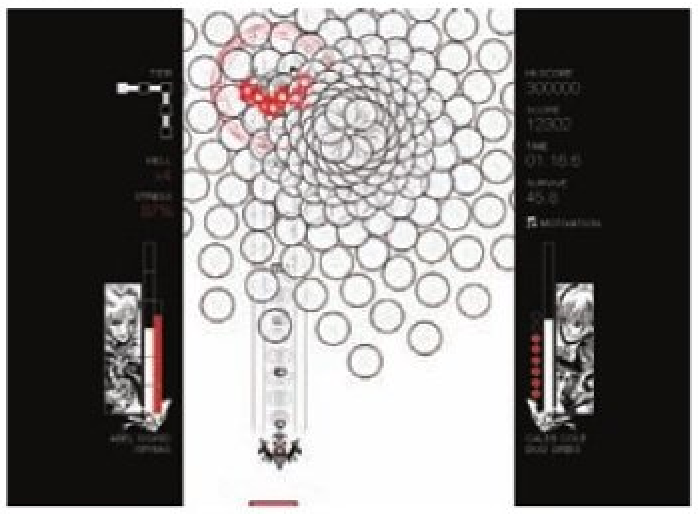
HOMEBREW HEROES

Abraham Morales, head boffin of Red Wolf (TeamRedWolf.com), was the man behind recent Xbox Live Indie shoot-'em-up Vorpal, so we approached him for a one-to-one chat. Thankfully, the result didn't involve bullets

Q&A

Retro Gamer: What got you into developing games?
Abraham Morales: Computers and games were part of my daily routine at a very young age. Back then my older brother introduced me to something called QBasic on my old PS/2 computer – 4MB of RAM awesomeness – so I got hooked on programming. I had quite an imagination as much as any other kid, but I knew I had it in me to tell a story. As I played a lot of SNES games and got more and more into programming, I immediately knew how I was going to tell my tales.

RG: How did Red Wolf come together?
AM: After a lot of projects I finally decided to get serious with my games. For that I figured I needed a team and we needed a name, and so Red Wolf begins. I met Eduardo Varela, *Vorpal*'s character/ship designer, at my university here in Mexico. Looking at his art made my brain flow with a lot of ideas for videogames, so I approached him with a couple of ideas, one of them being *Vorpal*, and so Red Wolf was a team of two. Emmanuel Ah-son, trance composer extraordinaire, came mid-development. I was getting worried that *Vorpal* was nearing release and I still didn't have any music, but Emmanuel jumped on board – he lives in France, by the way. Lastly, the very talented Yamel Beltrán, and a long-time friend of mine, lent me her voice for the game. Today, Red Wolf has grown a bit; hopefully it'll keep growing so we can deliver great games.


» [360] Just shoot at where all the bullets come from.

RG: Did the game itself or the distinctive look come first?
AM: The look came first. Originally it was a black-and-white 2D Cave-style shooter. I knew I wanted something elegant, but with a mix of retro and innovative gameplay, as well as a fun challenge for fans of the genre. With the idea of creating something different, I scratched the Cave-style design for something that resembled a fighting game and I added the red colours to really make the game come alive.

RG: *Vorpal* is Red Wolf's first release as a team. What else have the various members done previously?
AM: The other members involved with *Vorpal* are very talented, but this is their first time lending those talents to videogame development. Eduardo and Yamel are fantastic character and graphic designers, and Emmanuel has released various music albums.

RG: What plans do you have for the future? Any genre you'd like to try but haven't to date?
AM: Well, if all goes well, I plan to release three games this year. And I might as well announce it: one of them is *Vorpal II*. I've always wanted to do a classic RPG and tell a good, intriguing story, and most of it is already written down story-wise, but that will probably be next year's project. Let's see how it goes.

RG: Who would you say are your programming heroes?
AM: This is a really difficult question. I don't know them by name, since typically we programmers tend to stay behind the curtain, but *Dead Space*'s interface programmers, the people behind Hideo Kojima's *Zone Of The Enders: The 2nd Runner*, *Ikaruga*, ZUN from the *Touhou* series – believe me, those bullet patterns are a chore. There are so many games that I could mention, where behind all those fancy graphics there's a team of incredible programmers that manage to pull off all of the game designer's crazy ideas. You guys and girls are my heroes.

RG: Finally, what advice can you give to anybody wanting to become involved in indie development?
AM: Stop procrastinating! If you have the talent and you have a great idea, what's stopping you? If you lack the talent, then assemble a team! Organise your schedule and keep a journal – write EVERYTHING.

HIGH FIVE

The classic games that Abraham can't live without

1. **Ballistic (XBLIG)** The graphics are beautiful and the gameplay is so addictive.
2. **Score Rush (XBLIG)** This really is bullet hell.
3. **Cthulhu Saves The World (XBLIG)** Classic RPG fun!
4. **Zombie Accountant (XBLIG)** Get those taxes done, but don't eat your co-workers!
5. **Battle High: San Bruno (XBLIG)** Really cool indie fighting game.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

STAR LETTER

HOMEBREW DESERVES AWARDS

Dear Retro Gamer,

Why don't you run a homebrew awards show every year? I am absolutely fascinated by what today's talented bedroom coders can get out of machines like the Spectrum and C64, and the homebrew section is always the first part of the magazine that I turn to. There have been some quality games released over the last few months, and while **Retro Gamer** is one of the few mainstream magazines that recognise these achievements, I do feel that more could be done.

I know that a large number of websites run their own homebrew award shows each year, but I really think that this is something that **Retro Gamer** could push, as it has much more clout. You could have a panel of classic developers rating the games. Hold the event at a cool venue like last year's R3PLAY event in Blackpool and even get Iain Lee to host it.

It would be a fantastic celebration of the achievements of these hardworking coders and I'm sure it would be massively popular with your readership. Homebrew games are often full of imagination and technical polish and can often put full-price releases to shame – I'd choose a Jonathan Cauldwell game over something from Bungie any day of the week.

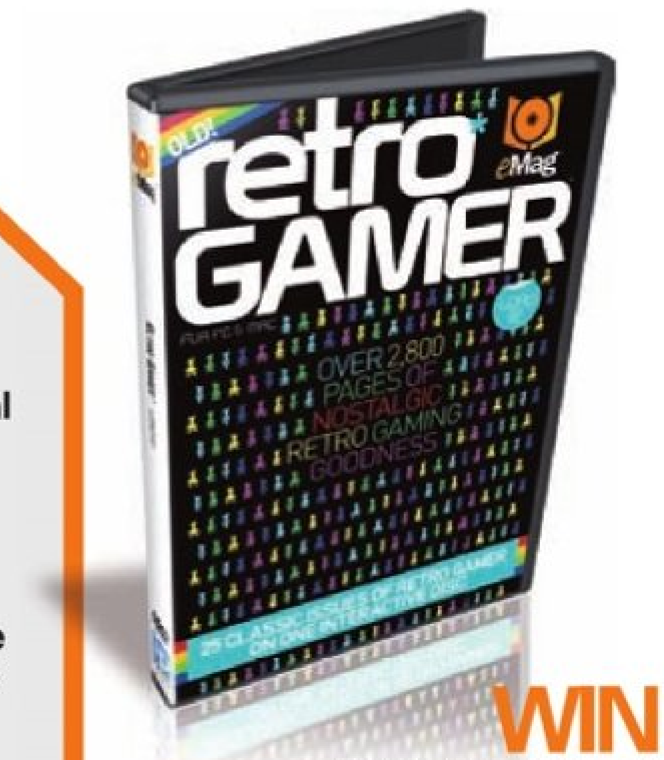
Please give homebrew the recognition it deserves.

Paul Rogers

While we agree that homebrew coders deserve more recognition, we're not sure if an actual awards show would work, particularly if we were responsible for it. Still, we certainly like your thinking outside the box, so have an eMag for putting forward such an interesting idea.



» [PC] Would you want Retro Gamer to host a yearly home brew award show? Paul Rogers does.



WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words, or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

POSTER POWER

Dear Retro Gamer,

I'm not sure if you can help, but my husband loves the artwork that featured on the front cover of issue 85. Do you know if it's possible to get this as a picture/print? Any information you have would be great.

Many thanks,

Sue Hewing

Thanks for the interest, Sue. Sadly, we've looked into this and it's not something that we'll be planning to do in the immediate future. That's not to say that we won't ever consider printing posters, or using the striking image in another way at a later date, but we won't be doing anything just yet.

DUNGEONS AND GOLD BOXES

Dear Retro Gamer,

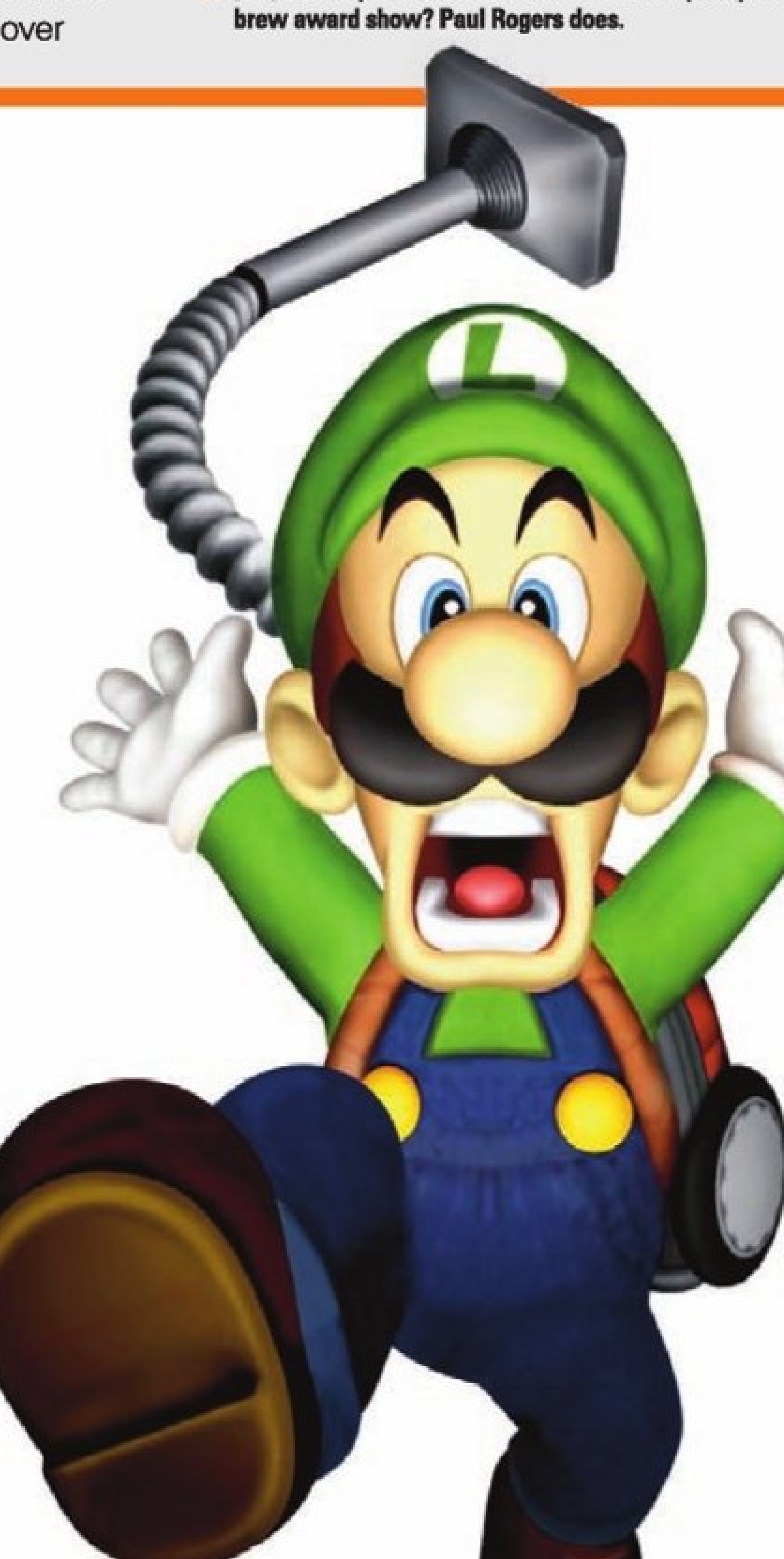
Have you ever produced a feature on the 'Gold Box' RPGs by SSI? If not, I think it would be fascinating to read the stories behind such great games as *Death Knights Of Krynn* and *Buck Rogers: Countdown To Doomsday* – my mum locked away my Amiga as I was playing it so much that I was not revising for my GCSEs at the time.

Maybe you could do a feature on these classic old games and also mention how you can get them to work on new systems, as I've had a frustrating time with ScummVM!

Brilliant mag, by the way. It's just a shame that it sells out so quickly at my local WHSmiths.

Richard Gibson

Believe it or not, a feature about the Gold Box games has been pitched to us in the past. Darran is also a big fan of *Dungeons & Dragons*, which many of the games were based on, so it's definitely something we'll put into motion. Running old games on new hardware is also a great idea, as anyone who's been reading the Minority Report thread on the forum will realise.

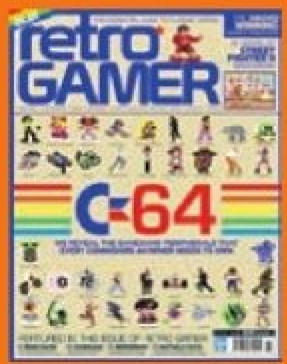


» It would appear that Wayne Steadman loves *Luigi's Mansion* nearly as much as we do.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Dear Retro Gamer,

I am a long-time reader (from issue 2 onwards) and occasional commenter. I just wanted to let you know that I was



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>> YOUTUBE UPDATE

THIS MONTH DARRAN has been getting back into the Atari Lynx, so you'll find a fair number of videos ranging from the excellent *Ramparts* to *Shadow Of The Beast*. He might even put up a video of *Lemmings* if he can justify nabbing a copy at its insane price tag. Check out all his videos at the usual place.

slowly losing interest in your mag over the last six months, as it was constantly making references to new overpriced games, just because they had remote links to retro titles. I was almost debating with myself whether to cancel my subscription… and then you go and TOTALLY REDEEM YOURSELVES in this month's issue (Load 86).

I genuinely struggled to put this one down. The article on isometric games, other titles like *Druid* and *Starglider*, not to mention *Luigi's Mansion*. The *Luigi's Mansion* article must have had a typo in it as you refer to it as a future classic. Are you kidding? It is ALREADY a classic in my collection. I absolutely love it!

This is why I started reading your mag in the first place. Being reminded of old titles that were fantastic at the time but I'd totally forgotten about. And I like the fact that you still manage to keep us up to date on the newer HD versions of retro games without overdoing it. I feel you've got the right ratio in this issue. Play on!

Keep up this fantastic, refreshing trend, and I'm sorry I ever doubted you guys could make a great mag.

Best wishes,
Wayne Steadman

Glad to hear you enjoyed the issue, Wayne. Ensuring that there's the right amount of new and old content is quite a tightrope to follow, but we do think we successfully manage it on most issues.

MANA FROM HEAVEN

Hey guys,

I just wanted to tell you that you about made my month with the *Secret Of Mana* cover story – one of my favourite games of all time! I'll be holding on to that issue forever. Such great artwork.

Do you have any plans for articles on *Seiken Densetsu 3*, any of the *Mother* games, or any of the *Chrono* games in later issues? I would be so stoked to read about those, especially if there were interviews with the teams that made them – and then you could ask where more sequels are or why the *Mana* games haven't been very good since the SNES days! Anyway, it was great to see some love for the SNES era of RPGs; they're still the greatest, in my opinion.

Oh, and by the way, thanks for sending your mags stateside. I pick it up every month along with **games™**. The quality of both your magazines is top notch; they really put our other publications here to shame. Keep up the great work, and keep doing the Future Classics segment!

Cheers,
Rob (misfitskater6)

Thanks for the kind words, Rob; it's really appreciated. Japanese developers are notoriously difficult to get hold of for interviews, particularly for Western media and for games from companies where they might not work any more, but we will constantly push and have recently had a bit of success. There's some great input about the *Ridge Racer* series in this very issue, while a recent trip to Treasure – sadly Darran didn't get to go – will soon result in a meaty From The Archives and a making of *Radiant Silvergun*. Oh, and we're pretty sure we'll have some juicy stuff for issue 91's *Sonic* extravaganza…

> "Luigi's Mansion a future classic? Are you kidding? It is ALREADY a classic!"

RETRODATE PROFILE



Name:	Andrej Lazarević
Joined:	21 April 2010
Location:	Serbia
Occupation:	Student
Website:	Not given
Fave Games System:	SNES / Mega Drive



>> **[SNES] Will we ever get an official English translation of *Seiken Densetsu 3*? Considering Square's love of iOS ports, anything is possible…**

* BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles



High Score: 73,910



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: BUBBLES

Why I picked it: It's the closest I ever come to washing up, and a great example of how there's a retro game for everything.

Handy tip: Skim around the opening of the drain to gain a bonus. Watch out for giant ants, though.



High Score: 268,120



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: HELLFIRE

Why I picked it: Darran said it would make a man out of me.

Handy tip: You have four different ways of firing your lasers and you'll need to constantly make use of each of them to succeed.



High Score: 123,100



DAVID

CHOSEN GAME: SILKWORM

Why I picked it: I have fond memories of hammering this in my local arcade once upon a time.

Handy tip: Remember that shooting shields will create a screen-clearing smart bomb effect.

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

What's your favourite C64 game?

SirClive
Mine is *Bomb Jack*. Because it is utter crap and proves the Speccy is better.

thevulture
Going to have to plump for *Armalyte*. THE benchmark shooter of the time. Technically pushed the C64 to a whole new realm, uber playable and where else could you pilot a laser-spitting, ninja-death bath chair through the cold vacuum of space?

Zorrobandito
Raid On Bungeling Bay. It was unlike anything I had played before and to believe that the *SimCity* 'tiles' were island military bases required a leap of imagination so intense that it bent the fabric of space-time.

jdanddiet
Stay a while… Stay forever… It's *Impossible Mission*!

joefish
Wizball. Like so many original C64 titles it was designed as an exact fit for the machine's capabilities, but it didn't suffer for it. It was an inspired concept to combine a plot about colouring in the world with the palletised graphics of the machine. The slickest version of this game is still the original; and that's including the 16-bit versions and PC remake. And I don't even like smelly beige breadbins.

boggyb68
Jeez… Now THAT'S a question. Probably *Ghostbusters*. Not for the gameplay, which was fine, but to just listen to the theme tune and to press the space bar at the right time in the chorus.

Rory Milne
I'll go for *Iridis Alpha*. In my opinion it's one of the most well-rounded of Jeff Minter's many C64 shooters. Not too off-the-wall, lovely visuals, intuitive control system, great sounds and most importantly pure undiluted hard-as-nails gameplay to satisfy even the most demanding of shmuppits.

slacey1070
International Soccer – proof that the C64 was so much better than the Spectrum. Play it next to *Match Day* and the squeaky one comes off a very poor second. It was amazing how good it felt to play – I played and played and played that game. I especially liked it when you could do the 'seal' and run down the pitch with the ball bouncing on your head and run into the net. For me, back then, it WAS *Match Of The Day* – all it needed was Jimmy Hill at half time.

Fred83
Flimbo's Quest with its damn catchy tune and addictive gameplay.

Darran@ Retro Gamer
I'll admit to being absolutely blown away by *Armalyte* when I saw it. Truly stunning shooter, and even though I would visit my friend Paul Elkins to play on his Spectrum, I would usually end up in his brother's room playing that superb shmup.

webding
This should be a ridiculously tough question. I spent years of my childhood playing on the C64, and can think of dozens of absolute classics, but my favourite game of all time is *Last Ninja 2*, so I will go for that. *The Last Ninja* was a groundbreaking title, but the sequel simply perfected what was already a brilliant formula. It looked great, played great, was a challenge without being stupidly hard. And the music…

merman
I have so many favourites I wrote a book about them. If I was picking just one, I'd say *Paradroid* by Andrew Braybrook. A fascinating combination of maze game, shoot-'em-up, strategic elements and lovely bas-relief graphics, improved even further by the Heavy Metal Edition.

TMR
Io, which is almost constantly my top game on any platform. I forget and demote it occasionally, then play it again.

ipmarks
As a Spectrum owner the game that really made me jealous that my friend Matt, a C64 owner, owned was *Little Computer People*. I really loved that game, and used to make him load it every time I went round his house. I so wanted my own copy, but they never to my knowledge made a 48k ZX version, so I remained childless. Sad but true.

Joey
Super Cycle. It had a brilliant sense of speed and the intro music was great. I also liked how you could change the colour of your bike and leathers.

Crunchy
Uridium. The only C64 game I truly envied when I was a Spectrum owner. The version on the Spectrum just couldn't touch it. I like the smooth back-and-forth scrolling. I like the speed of it all. I like the way the Manta flips over – it's one of the best animations ever achieved on any system, both modern and retro. *Uridium* is one of a handful of games that haven't aged at all for me. If it hit XBLA completely unchanged I'd put 1,200 Points down without thinking.

Dave300
Wizball – I never owned a C64 but a schoolmate had one and I used to love the SID tune! Essential purchase for my ST!

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

BEST TONY HAWK

Van With the recent announcement that Activision is parting ways with Tony, what game of the series did you like best? Personally, I enjoyed them all, excluding handhelds and *Ride/Shred*.

C=Style I think it peaked with *3* myself; I loved that game. Though *Tony Hawk 2* was the game that really got me into the series and in its own way it's equally as good.

felgekarp I've only played *Project 8* but I was not impressed with it at all. I fancied a bit of skateboarding action as well. Mind you, I didn't reckon that much to *Skate* either.

Roo *Pro Skater 3* was my favourite. It's an absolute classic, in my opinion. The rot did begin to set in when *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4* came out, though.

STINKERS YOU BOUGHT

MattyC64c Thinking back to the 8-bit and 16-bit and 32-bit eras, tell us about some games you bought that you were utterly disappointed with.

Skull Commander Being a *Street Fighter* nut, I bought *Street Fighter: The Movie* at full price on my PAL PSone, not long after it came out. I did get some fun from it, but it is generally a bit of a crap-fest.

che_don_john *Roland On The Ropes* (CPC). I was very young when I bought this and so wasn't the most aware when it came to choosing games; I picked it simply because I had another game called *Roland In The Caves*, and it was very, very hard

Cauterize *Small Soldiers* for the classic Game Boy. I played it and bought it again recently only to find myself horrified at what I subjected myself to over time.

ANNOYING ENEMIES

Nat 91 What's your least favourite videogame enemy? Mine's the flea man from *Castlevania*: annoying little git hopping around. KEEP STILL WHILE I KILL YOU!!!

sscott The regenerating bad guy in *Dead Space*, though you do get to kill him eventually.

SpeedBreaker I was playing the original *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* arcade game on MAME earlier today. Those spear-carrying Foot Soldiers sure are cheap gits.

Wil Those flippin' birds that double back and home in on you in *Imhotep* on the C64. That's probably the most annoyed I've ever been with a videogame.

Ferret Oxide The vampires in *Chaos*. Pretty much indestructible unless you have some good spells or a vamp of your own.

OLD vs NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *Street Fighter* game is the best?

Street Fighter II



Super Street Fighter IV 3D



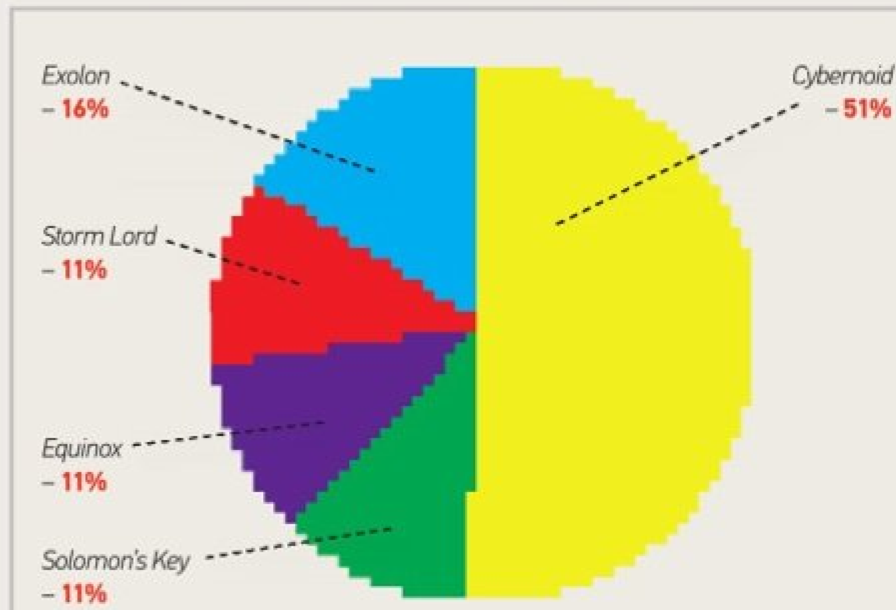
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Nakamura
Street Fighter IV is decent but the characters look stupid and the game feels like a parody.

Shadowman
Even though I don't have my 3DS yet, I'd still pick *SSF IV 3D*, without a doubt.

HOT TOPIC

Best Raffaele Cecco game



"I loved his big, colourful Speccy games. The *Cybernoid* and *Stormlord* games were absolutely tremendous" **– the_hawk**

"*Cybernoid* and *Exolon* stand head and shoulders above the others and are both classics" **– sirclive1**

"I would go with *Exolon*, which was stunning at the time, particularly on the Speccy. Great theme tune too" **– FatTrucker**

CONTACT US

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>> WHERE'S MATT?

Dear Retro Gamer,

I am once again forced to write in due to your complete inability to understand what should feature in your actual magazine. As each issue comes out more and more of its focus is on newer systems, something that I have absolutely no interest in. Your recent N64 article was absolutely laughable. Not only was it dedicated to a system that is about as retro as an Xbox 360, but the content was so light that my issue actually blew away when I took it outside. I think it's absolutely disgusting that you've tried to spread its paltry amount of content over so many pages, but then this is rather typical of the general lack of effort that you put into the magazine. And don't even get me started on that sodding Cave feature.

The one redeeming moment in this month's otherwise complete waste of paper was Martyn Carroll's *Jet Set Willy II* article. Even this, however, was ruined because there was hardly any input from Matthew Smith himself.

The quicker you guys realise that genuine talents like Matthew Smith need their own dedicated features each month, the quicker you'll start clawing back your no doubt dwindling readership.

Matthew Lightbourne



>> Matthew Lightbourne has no love for the N64, but is it retro? Let us know by visiting the forum.

"Your N64 feature was dedicated to a system that is as retro as an Xbox 360"

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Steve's left

Our awesome designer, Steve, has moved on and now resides on sister magazine X360. Fortunately for us, he's still joining us for cups of tea and hasn't deserted his duties of making the best damned cuppa in the office. All is not lost for the good ship Retro Gamer, though, as the equally awesome Kate Logsdon has joined us. Kate has already worked on games™'s retro section, so you know the magazine is going to be in very safe hands.

We're sorry that you felt the N64 feature wasn't up to standard, but we're actually proud of it. We intended to make it a bit different to the usual features, and although it might look light to you, an immense amount of work went into it. As for Matthew Smith… Really?

GARGOYLE GROAN

Dear Retro Gamer,

I've been a subscriber to your superb magazine for over four years now, but I don't ever recall seeing a feature on Gargoyle Games or any of their games.

Has there ever been a feature on this company or any of the games? If so, which issues did they appear in, so that I might track down a copy on eBay? If not, why not?

The games they produced were groundbreaking at the time. *Tir Na Nog*, *Dun Darach* and *Marsport* are all worthy of coverage, with *Dun Darach* being a personal favourite. I remember buying it as soon as it was released and two weeks later I had it solved. I sent the solution and map into *Crash* magazine. I remember my father phoning Gargoyle Games to see if anyone else had claimed to solve it first. By all accounts we were the first. Massive game with a great atmosphere and great puzzles. Superb stuff.

Please do an article on it if you haven't already done so.

Pete McElroy

Gargoyle Games is one of the few 8-bit developers that we haven't managed to cover yet, although that's not through lack of trying. We featured *Dun Durach* as a classic game in issue 51, while *Scooby Doo, Sweevo's World* and *Thundercats* have all featured as Retro Revivals in issues 60, 36 and 50 respectively.

* CURRENTLY PLAYING

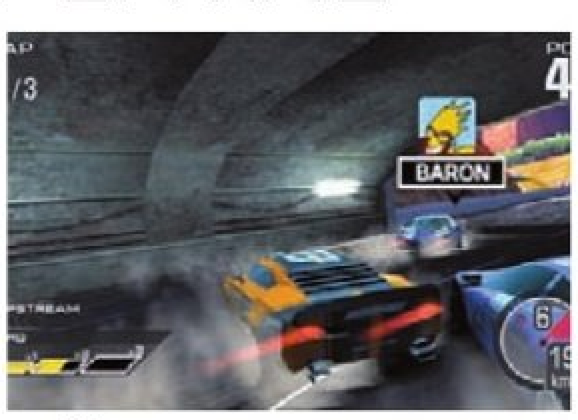




DARRAN

Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars

I've been hammering *Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars*. Created by Julian Gollop, it's a masterful strategy game that is proving impossible to put down. Along with *Ridge Racer 3D* it's my favourite 3DS game so far.





STUART

Ridge Racer 3D

Must admit I've been sinking a fair bit of time into this. While it's little more than a greatest hits of past *Ridge Racer* titles, it's insanely fast, has some of my favourite tunes from the series and has some very effective 3D.





DAVID

Tomb Raider Trilogy

I've just recently finished Ubisoft's *Prince Of Persia* trilogy, so this seemed like the perfect thing to stick in my PS3. While I'm not keen on *Underworld*, there's no denying the quality of *Legend* and *Anniversary*.

retro* GAMER

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Jetpack

HOVER BOVVER

RETROREVIVAL



» PC DOS
» ADEPT SOFTWARE
» 1993

It's unusual to feel utter adulation for a game one moment and then seething rage towards it the next. But then *Jetpack* isn't your usual sort of game…

First released in 1993, it initially looks like a broken version of Douglas E. Smith's *Lode Runner*. We say broken, because while it has the same tiny sprite design and huge cavernous stages of the game it's obviously derived from, the inclusion of instant access to any area you want by jetpack initially appears to make the whole game rather pointless.

Those fears immediately fall away as soon as you start playing, as you're just left with a game that allows endless possibilities in how you tackle and complete each of the huge levels.

As with *Lode Runner*, you're simply required to collect a set number of objects – green gems in this case – before you can complete the stage. Instead of being equipped with a spade though, you have access to a handy multipurpose phaser. Not only can it destroy monsters with a quick blast, it's also possible to bore your way through various materials, some of which can be burrowed through quicker than others.

The jetpack itself is an interesting addition, because while it gives you instant freedom, the need to constantly refuel and the general lack of mobility it grants you presents you with a clever risk and reward factor. It's not game-breaking in the slightest, especially as you'll sometimes have to collect it first, and the multitude of enemies (particularly on later stages) combined with its general erraticness means you can never take it completely for granted.

Then, of course, there are the levels themselves; huge, intricately designed caverns, which add greatly to the love/hate relationship you'll have with the game. At first they're relatively simple, but as you progress deeper you'll have to contend with switches, teleporters, barriers and other annoying objects.

Add in a rather excellent level editor that's an absolute cinch to use (and, as a result, almost as much fun as playing the game itself) and *Jetpack* soon proves to be a quirky little platformer that every PC owner should experience. *


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Flatline!

Martin Carroll investigates the death of 8-bit computers and reveals why systems like the C64, Spectrum and Amstrad went the way of the dodo



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STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3



» First introduced in the *Street Fighter Zero* series and named after the Japanese word for cherry blossom, spunky Sakura has been a fan-favourite ever since, and not just because she's not shy about showing off her knickers. Anyway, here she is at the end of *Zero*'s first instalment, where her unhealthy infatuation with Ryu gets her into all sorts of trouble…



01

» After being forced to battle Ryu in one of those tried-and-tested 'The main bad guy takes over the good guy and forces him to do things against his will' moments, Sakura finally faces off against the evil M. Bison.



02

» Things aren't looking good for Sakura however, as M. Bison has one of those oh-so-familiar 'Oh look, the bad guy has been defeated, but now he's miraculously on his feet and preparing to kill our heroine' moments.



03

» M. Bison re-exerts his control on Ryu and prepares to finish off Sakura in one of those slightly less cliched 'Oh my goodness! He's taken over the good guy again and is going to use him to kill off his beloved' moments.



04

» But at the last minute Bison's plans are ruined when Ryu has has one of those 'Hang on, you're not going to have your evil way with me. I'm going to fight you with all my will and stop you from making me destroy my beloved' moments. Hurrah!

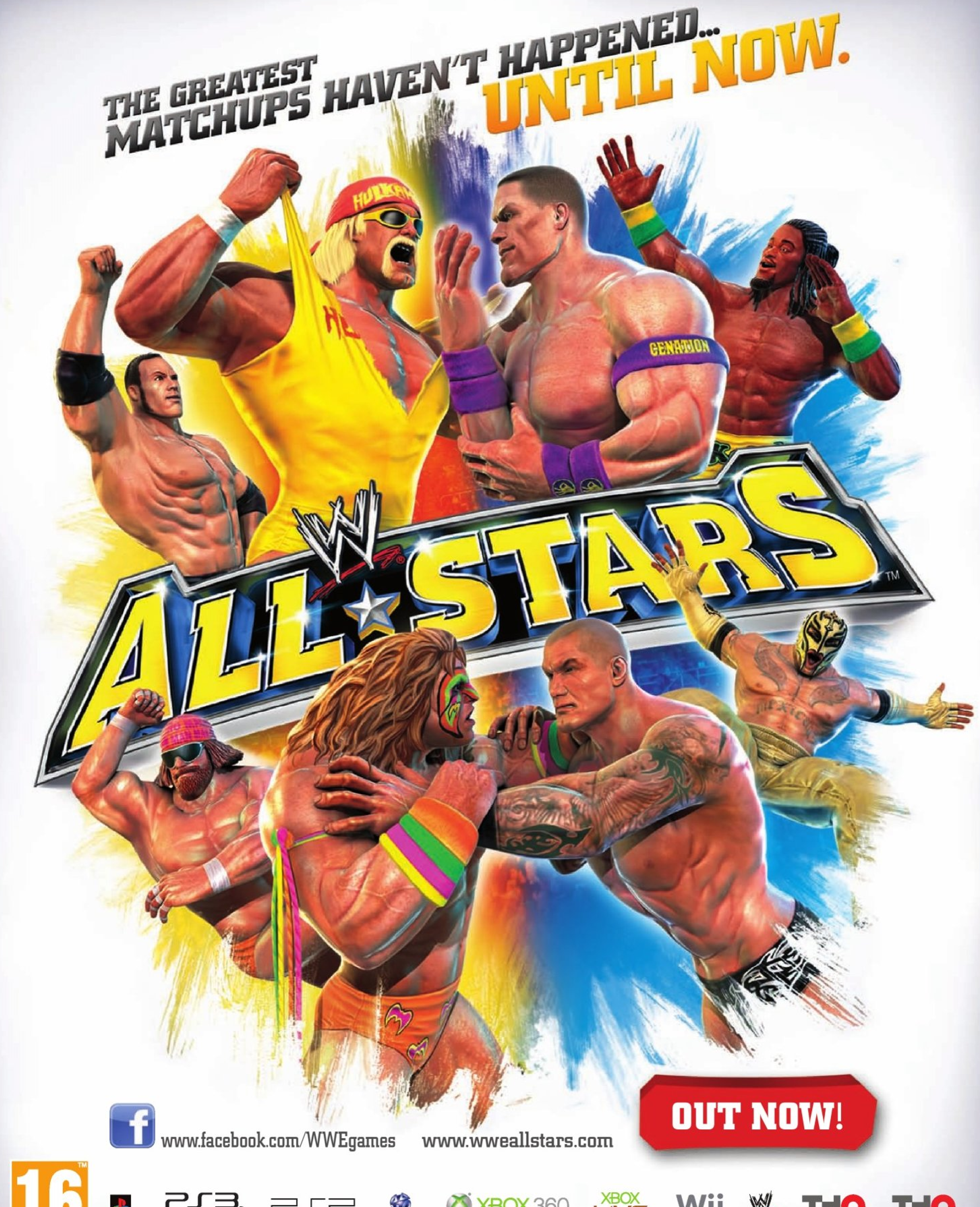


05

» With Bison destroyed, the heroes share a tender moment before Ryu has one of those 'I'm in training and the only way I'll ever get better is to talk all mysterious and travel the world like Caine' moments. Just like he does in every game. The end.



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